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# THE ROLLING EARTH



# THE ROLLING EARTH

OUTDOOR SCENES AND THOUGHTS  
FROM THE WRITINGS

OF

WALT WHITMAN

COMPILED BY

WALDO R. BROWNE

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN BURROUGHS

"I swear I will never again mention  
love or death inside a house,  
And I swear I will never translate  
myself at all, only to him or her  
who privately stays with me in  
the open air."

*Song of Myself.*

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TO ALL WHO ARE  
“ENAMOUR'D OF GROWING OUT-DOORS”





*After you have exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, love, and so on — have found that none of these finally satisfy, or permanently wear — what remains? Nature remains; to bring out from their torpid recesses the affinities of a man or woman with the open air, the trees, fields, the changes of seasons — the sun by day and the stars of heaven by night.*

*Who knows, (I have it in my fancy, my ambition,) but the pages now ensuing may carry ray of sun, or smell of grass or corn, or call of bird, or gleam of stars by night, or snow-flakes falling fresh and mystic, to denizen of heated city house, or tired workman or workwoman? — or may-be in sick-room or prison — to serve as cooling breeze, or Nature's aroma, to some fever'd mouth or latent pulse.*



## PREFATORY NOTE

NEARLY midway in his "Specimen Days," at the close of the Civil War memoranda, Whitman has the following footnote: "Without apology for the abrupt change of field and atmosphere — after what I have put in the preceding fifty or sixty pages — temporary episodes, thank heaven! — I restore my book to the bracing and buoyant equilibrium of concrete outdoor Nature, the only permanent reliance for sanity of book or human life." It is from the pages following this footnote that all the prose selections in the present volume are taken. "They run," says Whitman, "any time within nearly five or six years. Each was carelessly pencilled in the open air, at the time and place." "My plan was originally for hints and data of a Nature-poem that

## PREFATORY NOTE

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should carry one's experiences a few hours, commencing at noon-flush, and so through the after-part of the day — I suppose led to such idea by my own life-afternoon now arrived. But I soon found I could move at more ease, by giving the narrative at first hand. . . . Thus I went on, years following, various seasons and areas, spinning forth my thoughts . . . jotting all down in the loosest sort of chronological order, and here printing from my impromptu notes, hardly even the seasons group'd together, or anything corrected — so afraid of dropping what smack of outdoors or sun or starlight might cling to the lines, I dared not try to meddle with or smooth them."

"Literature flies so high," he adds in another place, "and is so hotly spiced, that our notes may seem hardly more than breaths of common air, or draughts of water to drink. But that is part of our lesson."

## PREFATORY NOTE

Acknowledgment is due to Mr. Horace Traubel, Whitman's literary executor, for courteous permission to include in these pages certain copyrighted matter from "Leaves of Grass."



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## INTRODUCTION

THE editor of this volume of selections from the prose and poetry of Walt Whitman is peculiarly happy in his choice of a title. To my mind, Whitman was the poet of the Earth considered as an orb in the heavens, in a fuller sense than any other poet has been. The idea of the "Rolling Earth" forms a sort of background to much that he wrote. His thoughts dwelt with the spheres, — not as the scientist thinks of them, but as the poet and prophet think of them. I believe it was a personal conviction with him that in the future life he would be "eligible," as he said, to visit the spheres. I remember that often in our walks by starlight he would suddenly stop and gaze long and intently at the sky, and then pass on without a word.

As a poet he did not specialize upon

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flowers or birds or scenery, or any of the mere prettinesses of nature, but he thought of wholes, he tried himself by wholes, he emulated the insouciance, the impartiality, the mass movements of the earth. "I reckon I behave no prouder," he says, "than the level I plant my house by." The great common, universal facts thrilled him, inspired him, and he tried his own work by them. "Tallying" was a favorite word with him, and he would fain have his free flowing lines tally "earth's soil, trees, winds, tumultuous waves." Over and over he turns his gaze upon the sky and upon the midnight constellations, and seeks to draw courage and composure from them. His panoramic style comes largely from his habit of contemplating the earth as a whole, "swift swimming in space." He sees processions and mass movements, continents and oceans, races and peoples flowing by him.

I doubt if any other poet's imagination

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so revelled in thoughts of the whole scheme of things. Tennyson strikes the note at times in "In Memoriam," and in one or two other poems, but not in the same large prophetic way. Tennyson's imagination was kindled more by the deductions of science; Whitman's emotions, while in strict accord with science, were more primitive and personal, and more akin to those of Biblical writers. What I mean to say is that Tennyson's interest in the results of modern science was more purely intellectual than was Whitman's. He was more disposed to use them to point a moral or adorn a tale than was Whitman. Whitman did not feel overshadowed by science as Tennyson at times did. His egoism was greater than that of Tennyson, and he subordinated the results of science to his own spiritual ends. To the men of science he said: —

"Gentlemen, to you the first honors always !  
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling."

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His attitude toward science is well seen in this passage: —

“I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and  
the reasons of things,  
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.  
I cannot say to any person what I hear — I cannot  
say it to myself — it is very wonderful.”

He thus gazed upon science complacently, and not with perturbations as Tennyson did at times. His muse was not abashed or disturbed in its presence; rather was it delighted and stimulated. He felt perfectly secure in his own interpretation of the cosmos: —

“Lo! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute fiats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,  
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,  
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.”

“Earth's orbic scheme” is one of Whitman's phrases, —

“What is the part the wicked and the loathsome bear  
within earth's orbic scheme?”

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"The round, impassive globe with all its shows of day and night," is another line. "The apple-shaped earth, and we upon it," again comes to his mind.

"It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe moving so exactly in its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt or the untruth of a single second, I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand years, nor ten billions of years, Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an architect plans and builds a house."

In his "Song of Myself," Whitman addresses himself to the earth with real lyrical passion: —

"Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunset — earth of the mountains misty-topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!  
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!  
Far-swooping elbow'd earth — rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
Smile, for your lover comes."

It was Professor Clifford, I believe, who



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first named this passion of Whitman "cosmic emotion." Whitman's mood and temper are so habitually begotten by the contemplation of the orbs, and of the laws and processes of universal nature, that the phrase often comes to my mind in considering him.

Any large view of life, any broad survey of nature and mankind, is a good preparation for the understanding of Whitman. He demands the outdoor temper and habit, he demands a sense of space and power, and, above all things, a feeling for reality. He tries his verse by the standards of concrete nature: —

"I will confront these shows of the day and night,  
I will know if I am to be less than they."

"Logic and sermons never convince," he says. "The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul." "My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait, I moisten the roots of all that has grown"; and his direct, broadcast ways, and fluid, copious, informal lines do

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suggest the benefaction that nourishes the roots of all growing things.

But Whitman is not to be summed up in one phrase or trait; he loved nature in detail, he loved bird, flower, tree, insect, quadruped, and all characteristic rural scenes and incidents, as this collection shows. Some of the prose nature jottings which have been selected for this volume were made while he was visiting me at my home at West Park, on the Hudson. He never seemed to tire of country sights and sounds, or of country folk, or of hearing me relate experiences with bees and birds and other wild creatures. He always wanted these things in their natural setting, and in their relation to the rest of nature. He had not the Wordsworthian faculty or disposition of moralizing over simple rural incidents, nor yet of reaching the lyric note in his treatment of bird or flower or scene. The movement of his mind was epic. Yet how felicitous and telling some of his epi-

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thets and descriptive lines, — the apple in autumn hanging “indolent-ripe on the tree,” “the stretching light-hung roof of clouds,” “the high dilating stars,” “the white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,” and “the huge and thoughtful night.” See what fellowship he has with the night: —

“I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night — press close magnetic nourishing night!”

A whole sheaf of such lines and phrases descriptive of things in nature might be gathered from Whitman's pages. But I will desist.

This selection ought to meet a ready acceptance at the hands of the reading public, and to foster a love for Whitman and his writings in the minds and hearts of many who now know him not.

JOHN BURROUGHS.

ROXBURY, NEW YORK,  
September, 1911.

# THE ROLLING EARTH

*Away then to loosen, to unstring the divine bow, so tense, so long. Away, from curtain, carpet, sofa, book—from “society”—from city house, street, and modern improvements and luxuries—away to the primitive winding, wooded creek, with its untrimm’d bushes and turfy banks—away from ligatures, tight boots, buttons, and the whole cast-iron civilized life—from entourage of artificial store, machine, studio, office, parlor—from tailordom and fashion’s clothes—from any clothes, perhaps, for the nonce, the summer heats advancing, there in those watery, shaded solitudes. Away, thou soul, (let me pick thee out singly, reader dear, and talk in perfect freedom, negligently, confidentially,) for one day and night at least, returning to the naked source-life of us all—to the breast of the great silent savage all-acceptive Mother. Alas! how many of us are so sodden—how many have wander’d so far away, that return is almost impossible.*

## A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

### I

A SONG of the rolling earth, and of words  
according,

Were you thinking that those were the  
words, those upright lines? those  
curves, angles, dots?

No, those are not the words, the sub-  
stantial words are in the ground and  
sea,

They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the  
words, those delicious sounds out of  
your friends' mouths?

No, the real words are more delicious than  
they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,  
(In the best poems re-appears the body,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

man's or woman's, well-shaped, natural, gay,  
Every part able, active, receptive, without  
shame or the need of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire — those are words,  
I myself am a word with them — my qualities  
interpenetrate with theirs —  
my name is nothing to them,  
Though it were told in the three thousand  
languages, what would air, soil,  
water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding  
gesture, are words, sayings,  
meanings,  
The charms that go with the mere looks of  
some men and women, are sayings  
and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those in-  
audible words of the earth,  
The masters know the earth's words and  
use them more than audible words.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,  
The earth neither lags nor hastens,  
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent  
    in itself from the jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and  
    excrescences show just as much as  
    perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous  
    enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait,  
    they are not so conceal'd either,  
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by  
    print,  
They are imbued through all things convey-  
    ing themselves willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I  
    utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what  
    avail am I to you?  
To bear, to better, lacking these of what  
    avail am I?

. . . . .



## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten,  
    promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies,  
    shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse  
    to exhibit itself, possesses still underneath,  
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the  
    august chorus of heroes, the wail of slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the  
    dying, laughter of young people,  
    accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these possessing words that  
    never fail.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

To her children the words of the eloquent  
    dumb great mother never fail,  
The true words do not fail, for motion  
    does not fail and reflection does  
    not fail,  
Also the day and night do not fail, and  
    the voyage we pursue does not  
    fail.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters,  
    the elder and younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on  
    with the rest.

With her ample back towards every  
    beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth and the  
    equal fascinations of age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits  
    undisturb'd,  
Holding up in her hand what has the char-

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

acter of a mirror, while her eyes  
glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying  
none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly  
before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,  
Duly the twenty-four appear in public  
every day,  
Duly approach and pass with their com-  
panions or a companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own,  
but from the countenances of those  
who are with them,  
From the countenances of children or  
women or the manly countenance,  
From the open countenances of animals or  
from inanimate things,  
From the landscape or waters or from the  
exquisite apparition of the sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours,  
faithfully returning them,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Every day in public appearing without fail,  
but never twice with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed  
the three hundred and sixty-five  
resistlessly round the sun;

Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow  
close three hundred and sixty-five  
offsets of the first, sure and necessary  
as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever with-  
standing, passing, carrying,

The soul's realization and determination  
still inheriting,

The fluid vacuum around and ahead still  
entering and dividing,

No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring,  
on no rock striking,

Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing  
losing,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Of all able and ready at any time to give  
strict account,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

### 2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are  
especially for you,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for  
whom the earth is solid and liquid,  
You are he or she for whom the sun and  
moon hang in the sky,  
For none more than you are the present and  
the past,  
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to  
herself, is the word of the past and  
present, and the true word of im-  
mortality;  
No one can acquire for another — not one,  
Not one can grow for another — not one.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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The song is to the singer, and comes back  
most to him,

The teaching is to the teacher, and comes  
back most to him,

The murder is to the murderer, and comes  
back most to him,

The theft is to the thief, and comes back  
most to him,

The love is to the lover, and comes back  
most to him,

The gift is to the giver, and comes back  
most to him — it cannot fail,

The oration is to the orator, the acting is  
to the actor and actress not to the  
audience,

And no man understands any greatness or  
goodness but his own, or the indi-  
cation of his own.

### 3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to  
him or her who shall be complete,

The earth remains jagged and broken only

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

to him or her who remains jagged  
and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that  
does not emulate those of the earth,  
There can be no theory of any account un-  
less it corroborate the theory of the  
earth,

No politics, song, religion, behavior, or  
what not, is of account, unless it  
compare with the amplitude of the  
earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, im-  
partiality, rectitude of the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter  
spasms than that which responds  
love,

It is that which contains itself, which never  
invites and never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in  
audible words,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

All merges toward the presentation of the  
    unspoken meanings of the earth,  
Toward him who sings the songs of the body  
    and of the truths of the earth,  
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of  
    words that print cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the  
    best,  
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I  
    cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its  
    organs,  
I become a dumb man.  
The best of the earth cannot be told any-  
    how, all or any is best,  
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper,  
    easier, nearer,  
Things are not dismiss'd from the places  
    they held before,



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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The earth is just as positive and direct as it  
was before,  
Facts, religions, improvements, politics,  
trades, are as real as before,  
But the soul is also real, it too is positive  
and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

### 4

These to echo the tones of souls and the  
phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls  
what were they then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial  
what were they then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do  
with the faith that tells the best,  
I will have to do only with that faith that  
leaves the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!  
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,  
It may have to wait long, but it will cer-  
tainly come in use,  
When the materials are all prepared and  
ready, the architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear  
without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and  
justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who  
best knows you, and encloses all and  
is faithful to all,  
He and the rest shall not forget you, they  
shall perceive that you are not an  
iota less than they,  
You shall be fully glorified in them.

## FEBRUARY DAYS

*February 7, 1878.* — Glistening sun to-day, with slight haze, warm enough, and yet tart, as I sit here in the open air, down in my country retreat, under an old cedar. For two hours I have been idly wandering around the woods and pond, lugging my chair, picking out choice spots to sit awhile — then up and slowly on again. All is peace here. Of course, none of the summer noises or vitality; to-day hardly even the winter ones. I amuse myself by exercising my voice in recitations, and in ringing the changes on all the vocal and alphabetical sounds. Not even an echo; only the cawing of a solitary crow, flying at some distance. The pond is one bright, flat spread, without a ripple — a vast Claude Lorraine glass, in which I study the sky, the light, the leafless trees, and an occasional crow, with flapping

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

wings, flying overhead. The brown fields have a few white patches of snow left.

*February 9.* — After an hour's ramble, now retreating, resting, sitting close by the pond, in a warm nook, writing this, shelter'd from the breeze, just before noon. The *emotional* aspects and influences of Nature! I, too, like the rest, feel these modern tendencies (from all the prevailing intellects, literature and poems,) to turn everything to pathos, ennui, morbidity, dissatisfaction, death. Yet how clear it is to me that those are not the born results, influences of Nature at all, but of one's own distorted, sick or silly soul. Here, amid this wild, free scene, how healthy, how joyous, how clean and vigorous and sweet!

*Mid-afternoon.* — One of my nooks is south of the barn, and here I am sitting now, on a log, still basking in the sun, shielded from the wind. Near me are the cattle, feeding on corn-stalks. Occasionally a cow or the young bull (how handsome

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and bold he is!) scratches and munches the far end of the log on which I sit. The fresh milky odor is quite perceptible, also the perfume of hay from the barn. The perpetual rustle of dry corn-stalks, the low sough of the wind round the barn gables, the grunting of pigs, the distant whistle of a locomotive, and occasional crowing of chanticleers, are the sounds.

*February 19.* — Cold and sharp last night — clear and not much wind — the full moon shining, and a fine spread of constellations and little and big stars — Sirius very bright, rising early, preceded by many-orb'd Orion, glittering, vast, sworded, and chasing with his dog. The earth hard frozen, and a stiff glare of ice over the pond. Attracted by the calm splendor of the night, I attempted a short walk, but was driven back by the cold. Too severe for me also at 9 o'clock, when I came out this morning, so I turn'd back again. But now, near noon, I have walk'd down the lane, basking all the way

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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in the sun (this farm has a pleasant southerly exposure,) and here I am, seated under the lee of a bank, close by the water. There are bluebirds already flying about, and I hear much chirping and twittering and two or three real songs, sustain'd quite awhile, in the mid-day brilliance and warmth. (There! that is a true carol, coming out boldly and repeatedly, as if the singer meant it.) Then as the noon strengthens, the reedy trill of the robin — to my ear the most cheering of bird-notes. At intervals, like bars and breaks (out of the low murmur that in any scene, however quiet, is never entirely absent to a delicate ear,) the occasional crunch and cracking of the ic-glare congeal'd over the creek, as it gives way to the sunbeams — sometimes with low sigh — sometimes with indignant, obstinate tug and snort.

SOON SHALL THE WINTER'S FOIL BE  
HERE

SOON shall the winter's foil be here;  
Soon shall these icy ligatures unbind and  
    melt — A little while,  
And air, soil, wave, suffused shall be in  
    softness, bloom and growth — a  
    thousand forms shall rise  
From these dead clods and chills as from  
    low burial graves.  
Thine eyes, ears — all thy best attributes  
    — all that takes cognizance of natu-  
    ral beauty,  
Shall wake and fill. Thou shalt perceive the  
    simple shows, the delicate miracles  
    of earth,  
Dandelions, clover, the emerald grass, the  
    early scents and flowers,  
The arbutus under foot, the willow's yel-  
    low-green, the blossoming plum and  
    cherry;

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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With these the robin, lark and thrush, sing-  
ing their songs — the flitting blue-  
bird;

For such the scenes the annual play brings  
on.



## SPRING OVERTURES — RECREATIONS

*February 10.* — The first chirping, almost singing, of a bird to-day. Then I noticed a couple of honey-bees spiriting and humming about the open window in the sun.

*February 11.* — In the soft rose and pale gold of the declining light, this beautiful evening, I heard the first hum and preparation of awakening spring — very faint — whether in the earth or roots, or starting of insects, I know not — but it was audible, as I lean'd on a rail (I am down in my country quarters awhile,) and look'd long at the western horizon. Turning to the east, Sirius, as the shadows deepen'd, came forth in dazzling splendor. And great Orion; and a little to the north-east the big Dipper, standing on end.

*February 20.* — A solitary and pleasant sundown hour at the pond, exercising arms,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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chest, my whole body, by a tough oak sapling thick as my wrist, twelve feet high — pulling and pushing, inspiring the good air. After I wrestle with the tree awhile, I can feel its young sap and virtue welling up out of the ground and tingling through me from crown to toe, like health's wine. Then for addition and variety I launch forth in my vocalism; shout declamatory pieces, sentiments, sorrow, anger, &c., from the stock poets or plays — or inflate my lungs and sing the wild tunes and refrains I heard of the blacks down south, or patriotic songs I learn'd in the army. I make the echoes ring, I tell you! As the twilight fell, in a pause of these ebullitions, an owl somewhere the other side of the creek sounded *too-oo-oo-oo-oo*, soft and pensive (and I fancied a little sarcastic) repeated four or five times. Either to applaud the negro songs — or perhaps an ironical comment on the sorrow, anger, or style of the stock poets.

## A HINT OF WILD NATURE

*February 13.* — As I was crossing the Delaware to-day, saw a large flock of wild geese, right overhead, not very high up, ranged in V-shape, in relief against the noon clouds of light smoke-color. Had a capital though momentary view of them, and then of their course on and on southeast, till gradually fading — (my eyesight yet first rate for the open air and its distances, but I use glasses for reading). Queer thoughts melted into me the two or three minutes, or less, seeing these creatures cleaving the sky — the spacious, airy realm — even the prevailing smoke-gray color everywhere (no sun shining) — the waters below — the rapid flight of the birds, appearing just for a minute — flashing to me such a hint of the whole spread of Nature, with

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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her eternal unsophisticated freshness, her never-visited recesses of sea, sky, shore — and then disappearing in the distance.

THE wild gander leads his flock through  
the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to  
me like an invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but  
I listening close  
Find its purpose and place up there toward  
the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the  
cat on the house-sill, the chickadee,  
the prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug  
at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with  
her half-spread wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a  
hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of  
the ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the  
wielders of axes and mauls, and the  
drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and  
week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest,  
easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for  
vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the  
first that will take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my  
good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

*Song of Myself.*

## AN AFTERNOON SCENE

*February 22.* — Last night and to-day rainy and thick, till mid-afternoon, when the wind chopp'd round, the clouds swiftly drew off like curtains, the clear appear'd, and with it the fairest, grandest, most wondrous rainbow I ever saw, all complete, very vivid at its earth-ends, spreading vast effusions of illuminated haze, violet, yellow, drab-green, in all directions overhead, through which the sun beam'd — an indescribable utterance of color and light, so gorgeous yet so soft, such as I had never witness'd before. Then its continuance: a full hour pass'd before the last of those earth-ends disappear'd. The sky behind was all spread in translucent blue, with many little white clouds and edges. To these a sunset, filling, dominating the esthetic and soul senses, sumptuously, tenderly, full. I

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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end this note by the pond, just light enough to see, through the evening shadows, the western reflections in its water-mirror surface, with inverted figures of trees. I hear now and then the *flup* of a pike leaping out, and rippling the water.



## UNSEEN BUDS

UNSEEN buds, infinite, hidden well,  
Under the snow and ice, under the darkness,  
    in every square or cubic inch,  
Germinal, exquisite, in delicate lace, micro-  
    scopic, unborn,  
Like babes in wombs, latent, folded, com-  
    pact, sleeping;  
Billions of billions, and trillions of trillions  
    of them waiting,  
(On earth and in the sea — the universe —  
    the stars there in the heavens,)  
Urging slowly, surely forward, forming  
    endless,  
And waiting ever more, forever more  
    behind.

## THE COMMON EARTH, THE SOIL

THE soil, too — let others pen-and-ink the sea, the air, (as I sometimes try) — but now I feel to choose the common soil for theme — naught else. The brown soil here, (just between winter-close and opening spring and vegetation) — the rain-shower at night, and the fresh smell next morning — the red worms wriggling out of the ground — the dead leaves, the incipient grass, and the latent life underneath — the effort to start something — already in shelter'd spots some little flowers — the distant emerald show of winter wheat and the rye-fields — the yet naked trees, with clear interstices, giving prospects hidden in summer — the tough fallow and the plow-team, and the stout boy whistling to his horses for encouragement — and there the dark fat earth in long slanting stripes upturn'd.

## LOAFING IN THE WOODS

*March 8.* — I write this down in the country again, but in a new spot, seated on a log in the woods, warm, sunny, midday. Have been loafing here deep among the trees, shafts of tall pines, oak, hickory, with a thick undergrowth of laurels and grapevines — the ground cover'd everywhere by debris, dead leaves, breakage, moss — everything solitary, ancient, grim. Paths (such as they are) leading hither and yon — (how made I know not, for nobody seems to come here, nor man nor cattle-kind). Temperature to-day about 60, the wind through the pine-tops; I sit and listen to its hoarse sighing above (and to the *stillness*) long and long, varied by aimless rambles in the old roads and paths, and by exercise-pulls at the young saplings, to keep my joints from getting stiff. Blue-

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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birds, robins, meadow-larks begin to appear.

*Next day, 9th.* — A snowstorm in the morning, and continuing most of the day. But I took a walk over two hours, the same woods and paths, amid the falling flakes. No wind, yet the musical low murmur through the pines, quite pronounced, curious, like waterfalls, now still'd, now pouring again. All the senses, sight, sound, smell, delicately gratified. Every snowflake lay where it fell on the evergreens, holly-trees, laurels, &c., the multitudinous leaves and branches piled, bulging-white, defined by edge-lines of emerald — the tall straight columns of the plentiful bronze-topt pines — a slight resinous odor blending with that of the snow. (For there is a scent to everything, even the snow, if you can only detect it — no two places, hardly any two hours, anywhere, exactly alike. How different the odor of noon from midnight, or winter from summer, or a windy spell from a still one.)

## THESE I SINGING IN SPRING

THESE I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
(For who but I should understand lovers  
and all their sorrow and joy?

And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)

Collecting I traverse the garden the world,  
but soon I pass the gates,

Now along the pond-side, now wading in a  
little, fearing not the wet,

Now by the post-and-rail fences where the  
old stones thrown there, pick'd from  
the fields, have accumulated,

(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up  
through the stones and partly cover  
them, beyond these I pass,)

Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in  
summer, before I think where I go,  
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stop-  
ping now and then in the silence,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop  
gathers around me,  
Some walk by my side and some behind,  
and some embrace my arms or  
neck,  
They the spirits of dear friends dead or  
alive, thicker they come, a great  
crowd, and I in the middle,  
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I  
wander with them,  
Plucking something for tokens, tossing  
toward whoever is near me,  
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,  
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which  
I pull'd off a live-oak in Florida as  
it hung trailing down,  
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a  
handful of sage,  
And here what I now draw from the water,  
wading in the pond-side,  
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves  
me, and returns again never to sep-  
arate from me,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

And this, O this shall henceforth be the  
token of comrades, this calamus-root  
shall,  
Interchange it youths with each other! let  
none render it back!)  
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild  
orange and chestnut,  
And stems of currants and plum-blows, and  
the aromatic cedar,  
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud  
of spirits,  
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or  
throw them loosely from me,  
Indicating to each one what he shall have,  
giving something to each;  
But what I drew from the water by the  
pond-side, that I reserve,  
I will give of it, but only to them that love  
as I myself am capable of loving.

## THE GATES OPENING

*April 6.* — Palpable spring indeed, or the indications of it. I am sitting in bright sunshine, at the edge of the creek, the surface just rippled by the wind. All is solitude, morning freshness, negligence. For companions my two kingfishers sailing, winding, darting, dipping, sometimes capriciously separate, then flying together. I hear their guttural twitterings again and again; for a while nothing but that peculiar sound. As noon approaches other birds warm up. The reedy notes of the robin, and a musical passage of two parts, one a clear delicious gurgle, with several other birds I cannot place. To which is join'd, (yes, I just hear it,) one low purr at intervals from some impatient hylas at the pond-edge. The sibilant murmur of a pretty stiff breeze now and then through the trees.



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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Then a poor little dead leaf, long frost-bound, whirls from somewhere up aloft in one wild escaped freedom-spree in space and sunlight, and then dashes down to the waters, which hold it closely and soon drown it out of sight. The bushes and trees are yet bare, but the beeches have their wrinkled yellow leaves of last season's foliage largely left, frequent cedars and pines yet green, and the grass not without proofs of coming fullness. And over all a wonderfully fine dome of clear blue, the play of light coming and going, and great fleeces of white clouds swimming so silently.

## THE FIRST DANDELION

SIMPLE and fresh and fair from winter's  
close emerging,  
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics,  
had ever been,  
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd  
grass — innocent, golden, calm as  
the dawn,  
The spring's first dandelion shows its trust-  
ful face.

## A COUPLE OF OLD FRIENDS

*Latter April.* — Have run down in my country haunt for a couple of days, and am spending them by the pond. I had already discover'd my kingfisher here (but only one — the mate not here yet). This fine bright morning, down by the creek, he has come out for a spree, circling, flirting, chirping at a round rate. While I am writing these lines he is disporting himself in scoots and rings over the wider parts of the pond, into whose surface he dashes, once or twice making a loud *souse* — the spray flying in the sun — beautiful! I see his white and dark-gray plumage and peculiar shape plainly, as he has deign'd to come very near me. The noble, graceful bird! Now he is sitting on the limb of an old tree, high up, bending over the water — seems to be

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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looking at me while I memorandize. I almost fancy he knows me.

*Three days later.* — My second kingfisher is here with his (or her) mate. I saw the two together flying and whirling around. I had heard, in the distance, what I thought was the clear rasping staccato of the birds several times already — but I could n't be sure the notes came from both until I saw them together. To-day at noon they appear'd, but apparently either on business, or for a little limited exercise only. No wild frolic now, full of free fun and motion, up and down for an hour. Doubtless, now they have cares, duties, incubation responsibilities. The frolics are deferr'd till summer-close.

O to make the most jubilant song!  
Full of music — full of manhood, woman-  
hood, infancy!  
Full of common employments — full of  
grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals — O for the  
swiftness and balance of fishes!  
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!  
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in  
a song!

O the joy of my spirit — it is uncaged — it  
darts like lightning!  
It is not enough to have this globe or a  
certain time,  
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

. . . . .

O the gleesome saunter over fields and  
hillsides!  
The leaves and flowers of the commonest

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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weeds, the moist fresh stillness of the  
woods,  
The exquisite smell of the earth at day-  
break, and all through the forenoon.

. . . . .

(O something pernicious and dread!  
Something far away from a puny and pious  
life!  
Something unproved! something in a trance!  
Something escaped from the anchorage and  
driving free.)

. . . . .

O to realize space!  
The plenteousness of all, that there are no  
bounds,  
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and  
moon and flying clouds, as one with  
them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!  
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not  
to any tyrant known or unknown,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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To walk with erect carriage, a step springy  
and elastic,

To look with calm gaze or with a flashing  
eye,

To speak with a full and sonorous voice out  
of a broad chest,

To confront with your personality all the  
other personalities of the earth.

. . . . .

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a  
slave,

|| To meet life as a powerful conqueror,  
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints  
or scornful criticisms,

To these proud laws of the air, the water  
and the ground, proving my interior  
soul impregnable,

And nothing exterior shall ever take com-  
mand of me.

*A Song of Joys.*

## TURF-FIRES — SPRING SONGS

*April 26.* — At sunrise, the pure clear sound of the meadow lark. An hour later, some notes, few and simple, yet delicious and perfect, from the bush-sparrow — towards noon the reedy trill of the robin. To-day is the fairest, sweetest yet — penetrating warmth — a lovely veil in the air, partly heat-vapor and partly from the turf-fires everywhere in patches on the farms. A group of soft maples near by silently bursts out in crimson tips, buzzing all day with busy bees. The white sails of sloops and schooners glide up and down the river; and long trains of cars, with ponderous roll, or faint bell notes, almost constantly on the opposite shore. The earliest wild flowers in the woods and fields, spicy arbutus, blue liverwort, frail anemone, and the pretty white blossoms of the bloodroot. I launch



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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out in slow rambles, discovering them. As I go along the roads I like to see the farmers' fires in patches, burning the dry brush, turf, debris. How the smoke crawls along, flat to the ground, slanting, slowly rising, reaching away, and at last dissipating. I like its acrid smell — whiffs just reaching me — welcomer than French perfume.

The birds are plenty; of any sort, or of two or three sorts, curiously, not a sign, till suddenly some warm, gushing, sunny April (or even March) day — lo! there they are, from twig to twig, or fence to fence, flirting, singing, some mating, preparing to build. But most of them *en passant* — a fortnight, a month in these parts, and then away. As in all phases, Nature keeps up her vital, copious, eternal procession. Still, plenty of the birds hang around all or most of the season — now their love-time, and era of nest-building. I find flying over the river, crows, gulls and hawks. I hear the after-

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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noon shriek of the latter, darting about, preparing to nest. The oriole will soon be heard here, and the twanging *meoeow* of the cat-bird; also the king-bird, cuckoo and the warblers. All along, there are three peculiarly characteristic spring songs — the meadow-lark's, so sweet, so alert and remonstrating (as if he said, "don't you see?" or, "can't you understand?") — the cheery, mellow, human tones of the robin — (I have been trying for years to get a brief term, or phrase, that would identify and describe that robin call) — and the amorous whistle of the high-hole. Insects are out plentifully at midday.

*April 29.* — As we drove lingering along the road we heard, just after sundown, the song of the wood-thrush. We stopp'd without a word, and listen'd long. The delicious notes — a sweet, artless, voluntary, simple anthem, as from the flute-stops of some organ, wafted through the twilight — echoing well to us from the perpendicular high

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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rock, where, in some thick young trees'  
recesses at the base, sat the bird — fill'd  
our senses, our souls.

## WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

WARBLE me now for joy of lilac-time, (re-  
turning in reminiscence,)  
Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake,  
souvenirs of earliest summer,  
Gather the welcome signs, (as children with  
pebbles or stringing shells,)  
Put in April and May, the hylas croaking  
in the ponds, the elastic air,  
Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its  
simple notes,  
Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget  
the high-hole flashing his golden  
wings.  
The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke,  
the vapor,  
Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the  
cerulean above,  
All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks  
running,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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The maple woods, the crisp February days  
    and the sugar-making,  
The robin where he hops, bright-eyed,  
    brown-breasted,  
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again  
    at sunset,  
Or flitting among the trees of the apple-  
    orchard, building the nest of his  
    mate,  
The melted snow of March, the willow send-  
    ing forth its yellow-green sprouts,  
For spring-time is here! the summer is  
    here! and what is this in it and  
    from it?  
Thou, soul, unloosen'd — the restlessness  
    after I know not what;  
Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up  
    and away!  
O if one could but fly like a bird!  
O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!  
To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as  
    a ship o'er the waters;  
Gathering these hints, the preludes, the

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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blue sky, the grass, the morning  
drops of dew,  
The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green  
heart-shaped leaves,  
Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called innocence,  
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone,  
but for their atmosphere,  
To grace the bush I love — to sing with the  
birds,  
A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in  
reminiscence.

## BUMBLE-BEES

MAY-MONTH — month of swarming, singing, mating birds — the bumble-bee month — month of the flowering lilac — (and then my own birth-month). As I jot this paragraph, I am out just after sunrise, and down towards the creek. The lights, perfumes, melodies — the bluebirds, grass birds and robins, in every direction — the noisy, vocal, natural concert. For undertones, a neighboring wood-pecker tapping his tree, and the distant clarion of chanticleer. Then the fresh-earth smells — the colors, the delicate drabs and thin blues of the perspective. The bright green of the grass has receiv'd an added tinge from the last two days' mildness and moisture. How the sun silently mounts in the broad clear sky, on his day's journey! How the warm beams bathe all, and come streaming kissingly and almost hot on my face!

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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A while since the croaking of the pond-frogs and the first white of the dog-wood blossoms. Now the golden dandelions in endless profusion, spotting the ground everywhere. The white cherry and pear-blows — the wild violets, with their blue eyes looking up and saluting my feet, as I saunter the wood-edge — the rosy blush of budding apple-trees — the light-clear emerald hue of the wheat-fields — the darker green of the rye — a warm elasticity pervading the air — the cedar-bushes profusely deck'd with their little brown apples — the summer fully awakening — the convocation of blackbirds, garrulous flocks of them, gathering on some tree, and making the hour and place noisy as I sit near.

*Later.* — Nature marches in procession, in sections, like the corps of an army. All have done much for me, and still do. But for the last two days it has been the great wild bee, the humble-bee, or “bumble,” as the children call him. As I walk, or hobble,



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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from the farm-house down to the creek, I traverse the before-mention'd lane, fenced by old rails, with many splits, splinters, breaks, holes, &c., the choice habitat of those crooning, hairy insects. Up and down and by and between these rails, they swarm and dart and fly in countless myriads. As I wend slowly along, I am often accompanied with a moving cloud of them. They play a leading part in my morning, midday or sunset rambles, and often dominate the landscape in a way I never before thought of — fill the long lane, not by scores or hundreds only, but by thousands. Large and vivacious and swift, with wonderful momentum and a loud swelling, perpetual hum, varied now and then by something almost like a shriek, they dart to and fro, in rapid flashes, chasing each other, and (little things as they are,) conveying to me a new and pronounc'd sense of strength, beauty, vitality and movement. Are they in their mating season? or what is the mean-

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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ing of this plenitude, swiftness, eagerness, display? As I walk'd, I thought I was follow'd by a particular swarm, but upon observation I saw that it was a rapid succession of changing swarms, one after another.

As I write, I am seated under a big wild-cherry tree — the warm day temper'd by partial clouds and a fresh breeze, neither too heavy nor light — and here I sit long and long, envelop'd in the deep musical drone of these bees, flitting, balancing, darting to and fro about me by hundreds — big fellows with light yellow jackets, great glistening swelling bodies, stumpy heads and gauzy wings — humming their perpetual rich mellow boom. (Is there not a hint in it for a musical composition, of which it should be the back-ground? some bumble-bee symphony?) How it all nourishes, lulls me, in the way most needed; the open air, the rye-fields, the apple orchards. The last two days have been faultless in

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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sun, breeze, temperature and everything; never two more perfect days, and I have enjoy'd them wonderfully. My health is somewhat better, and my spirit at peace. (Yet the anniversary of the saddest loss and sorrow of my life is close at hand.)

Another jotting, another perfect day: forenoon, from 7 to 9, two hours envelop'd in sound of bumble-bees and bird-music. Down in the apple-trees and in a neighboring cedar were three or four russet-back'd thrushes, each singing his best, and roulading in ways I never heard surpass'd. Two hours I abandon myself to hearing them, and indolently absorbing the scene. Almost every bird I notice has a special time in the year — sometimes limited to a few days — when it sings its best; and now is the period of these russet-backs. Meanwhile, up and down the lane, the darting, droning, musical bumble-bees. A great swarm again for my entourage as I return home, moving along with me as before.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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As I write this, two or three weeks later, I am sitting near the brook under a tulip tree, seventy feet high, thick with the fresh verdure of its young maturity — a beautiful object — every branch, every leaf perfect. From top to bottom, seeking the sweet juice in the blossoms, it swarms with myriads of these wild bees, whose loud and steady humming makes an undertone to the whole, and to my mood and the hour.

## OUT OF MAY'S SHOWS SELECTED

APPLE orchards, the trees all cover'd with  
blossoms;  
Wheat fields carpeted far and near in vital  
emerald green;  
The eternal, exhaustless freshness of each  
early morning;  
The yellow, golden, transparent haze of the  
warm afternoon sun;  
The aspiring lilac bushes with profuse  
purple or white flowers.

## A WATERFALL

I JOT this mem. in a wild scene of woods and hills, where we have come to visit a waterfall. I never saw finer or more copious hemlocks, many of them large, some old and hoary. Such a sentiment to them, secretive, shaggy — what I call weather-beaten and let-alone — a rich underlay of ferns, yew sprouts and mosses, beginning to be spotted with the early summer wild-flowers. Enveloping all, the monotone and liquid gurgle from the hoarse impetuous copious fall — the greenish-tawny, darkly transparent waters, plunging with velocity down the rocks, with patches of milk-white foam — a stream of hurrying amber, thirty feet wide, risen far back in the hills and woods, now rushing with volume — every hundred rods a fall, and sometimes three or four in that distance. A primitive forest

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

druidical, solitary and savage — not ten visitors a year — broken rocks everywhere — shade overhead, thick underfoot with leaves — a just palpable wild and delicate aroma.

## SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

### I

A FOOT and light-hearted (I take to the open  
road,

Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading  
wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I my-  
self am good-fortune,

Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone  
no more, need nothing,

Done with indoor complaints, libraries,  
querulous criticisms,

Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to  
them.



## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry  
    them with me wherever I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of  
    them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in  
    return.)

### 2

You road I enter upon and look around, I  
    believe you are not all that is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor  
    preference nor denial,  
The black with his woolly head, the felon,  
    the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are  
    not denied;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician,  
    the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's  
    stagger, the laughing party of  
    mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person's car-  
    riage, the fop, the eloping couple,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

The early market-man, the hearse, the  
moving of furniture into the town,  
the return back from the town,  
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes,  
none can be interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be  
dear to me.

### 3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
You objects that call from diffusion my  
meanings and give them shape!  
You light that wraps me and all things in  
delicate equable showers!  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by  
the roadsides!  
I believe you are latent with unseen exist-  
ences, you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong  
curbs at the edges!  
You ferries! you planks and posts of  
wharves! you timber-lined sides!  
you distant ships!

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd  
façades! you roofs!

You porches and entrances! you copings  
and iron guards!

You windows whose transparent shells  
might expose so much!

You doors and ascending steps! you arches!

You gray stones of interminable pavements!  
you trodden crossings!

From all that has touch'd you I believe you  
have imparted to yourselves, and  
now would impart the same secretly  
to me,

From the living and the dead you have  
peopled your impassive surfaces,  
and the spirits thereof would be evi-  
dent and amicable with me.

### 4

The earth expanding right hand and left  
hand,

The picture alive, every part in its best  
light,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

The music falling in where it is wanted, and  
stopping where it is not wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the  
gay fresh sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do  
not leave me?*

Do you say *Venture not — if you leave me  
you are lost?*

Do you say *I am already prepared, I am  
well-beaten and undenied, adhere to  
me?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to  
leave you, yet I love you,  
You express me better than I can express  
myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in  
the open air, and all free poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do  
miracles,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

I think whatever I shall meet on the road I  
shall like, and whoever beholds me  
shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

### 5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of  
limits and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total  
and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what  
they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplat-  
ing,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting  
myself of the holds that would hold  
me.  
I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the  
north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women You  
    have done such good to me I would  
    do the same to you,  
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women  
    as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness  
    among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be  
    blessed and shall bless me.

### 6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to  
    appear it would not amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women  
    appear'd it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the  
    best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and  
    sleep with the earth.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the  
whole race of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms  
law and mocks all authority and all  
argument against it).

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having  
it to another not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of  
proof, is its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and quali-  
ties and is content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immor-  
tality of things, and the excellence of  
things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of  
things that provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

not prove at all under the spacious  
clouds and along the landscape and  
flowing currents.

Here is realization,

Here is a man tallied — he realizes here  
what he has in him,

The past, the future, majesty, love — if  
they are vacant of you, you are va-  
cant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you  
and me?

Where is he that undoes stratagems and  
envelopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously  
fashion'd, it is apropos;

Do you know what it is as you pass to be  
loved by strangers?

Do you know the talk of those turning  
eye-balls?



## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

### 7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within  
    through embower'd gates, ever pro-  
    voking questions,  
These yearnings why are they? these  
    thoughts in the darkness why are  
    they?  
Why are there men and women that while  
    they are nigh me the sunlight ex-  
    pands my blood?  
Why when they leave me do my pennants of  
    joy sink flat and lank?  
Why are there trees I never walk under  
    but large and melodious thoughts  
    descend upon me?  
(I think they hang there winter and summer  
    on those trees and always drop fruit  
    as I pass);  
What is it I interchange so suddenly with  
    strangers?  
What with some driver as I ride on the seat  
    by his side?

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

What with some fisherman drawing his  
seine by the shore as I walk by and  
pause ?

What gives me to be free to a woman's and  
man's good-will ? what gives them  
to be free to mine ?

### 8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is  
happiness,

I think it pervades the open air, waiting at  
all times,

Now it flows, unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the  
freshness and sweetness of man and  
woman,

(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher  
and sweeter every day out of the  
roots of themselves, than it sprouts  
fresh and sweet continually out of  
itself).

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Toward the fluid and attaching character  
exudes the sweat of the love of young  
and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks  
beauty and attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing  
ache of contact.

### 9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with  
me!  
Traveling with me you find what never  
tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible  
at first, Nature is rude and incompre-  
hensible at first.  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are  
divine things well envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more  
beautiful than words can tell.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Allons! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, how-  
ever convenient this dwelling we  
cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however  
calm these waters we must not  
anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that sur-  
rounds us we are permitted to re-  
ceive it but a little while.

### IO

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,  
We will go where winds blow, waves dash,  
and the Yankee clipper speeds by  
under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the  
elements,  
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curi-  
osity;

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Allons! from all formules!

From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage  
— the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!

He traveling with me needs the best blood,  
thews, endurance,

None may come to the trial till he or she  
bring courage and health,

Come not here if you have already spent  
the best of yourself,

Only those may come who come in sweet  
and determin'd bodies,

No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or  
venereal taint is permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments,  
similes, rhymes,

We convince by our presence.)

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

### II

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but  
    offer rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to  
    you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that  
    you earn or achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you  
    were destin'd, you hardly settle your-  
    self to satisfaction before you are  
    call'd by an irresistible call to de-  
    part,  
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles  
    and mockings of those who remain  
    behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you  
    shall only answer with passionate  
    kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who  
    spread their reach'd hands toward  
    you.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to  
belong to them!

They too are on the road — they are the  
swift and majestic men — they are  
the greatest women,

Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of  
seas,

Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a  
mile of land,

Habitués of many distant countries, habi-  
tués of far-distant dwellings,

Trusters of men and women, observers of  
cities, solitary toilers,

Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blos-  
soms, shells of the shore,

Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of  
brides, tender helpers of children,  
bearers of children,

Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping  
graves, lowerers-down of coffins,

Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over  
the years, the curious years each

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

emerging from that which preceded  
it,

Journeyers as with companions, namely  
their own diverse phases,

Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized  
baby-days,

Journeyers gayly with their own youth,  
journeyers with their bearded and  
well-grain'd manhood,

Journeyers with their womanhood, ample,  
unsurpass'd, content,

Journeyers with their own sublime old age  
of manhood or womanhood,

Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the  
haughty breadth of the universe,

Old age, flowing free with the delicious  
near-by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was  
beginningless,

To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of  
nights,



## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

To merge all in the travel they tend to, and  
the days and nights they tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior  
journeys,

To see nothing anywhere but what you  
may reach it and pass it,

To conceive no time, however distant, but  
what you may reach it and pass  
it,

To look up or down no road but it stretches  
and waits for you, however long but  
it stretches and waits for you,

To see no being, not God's or any, but you  
also go thither,

To see no possession but you may possess  
it, enjoying all without labor or purchase,  
abstracting the feast yet not  
abstracting one particle of it,

To take the best of the farmer's farm and  
the rich man's elegant villa, and the  
chaste blessings of the well-married  
couple, and the fruits of orchards  
and the flowers of gardens,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

To take to your use out of the compact  
    cities as you pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you  
    afterward wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their  
    brains as you encounter them, to  
    gather the love out of their hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for  
    all that you leave them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as  
    many roads, as roads for traveling  
    souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, govern-  
    ments — all that was or is apparent  
    upon this globe or any globe, falls  
    into niches and corners before the  
    procession of souls along the grand  
    roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and  
    women along the grand roads of the

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

universe, all other progress is the  
needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled,  
mad, turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,  
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by  
men, rejected by men,  
They go! they go! I know that they go,  
but I know not where they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best —  
toward something great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or  
woman come forth!

You must not stay sleeping and dallying  
there in the house, though you built  
it, or though it has been built for  
you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from be-  
hind the screen!

It is useless to protest, I know all and ex-  
pose it.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining,  
    supping, of people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of  
    those wash'd and trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and de-  
    spair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to  
    hear the confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one,  
    skulking and hiding it goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets  
    of the cities, polite and bland in the  
    parlors,  
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in  
    the public assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at  
    the table, in the bedroom, every-  
    where,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form  
    upright, death under the breast-  
    bones, hell under the skull-bones,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Under the broadcloth and gloves, under  
the ribbons and artificial flowers,  
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking  
not a syllable of itself,  
Speaking of any thing else but never of  
itself.

### 14

Allons! through struggles and wars!  
The goal that was named cannot be coun-  
termanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?  
What has succeeded? yourself? your na-  
tion? Nature?  
Now understand me well — it is provided  
in the essence of things that from  
any fruition of success, no matter  
what, shall come forth something to  
make a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active  
rebellion,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

He going with me must go well arm'd,  
He going with me goes often with spare  
diet, poverty, angry enemies, deser-  
tions.

### 15

Allons! the road is before us!  
It is safe — I have tried it — my own feet  
have tried it well — be not detain'd!  
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten,  
and the book on the shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let  
the money remain unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of  
the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let  
the lawyer plead in the court, and  
the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than  
money!  
I give you myself before preaching or law;

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

Will you give me yourself? will you come  
travel with me?

Shall we stick by each other as long as we  
live?

## BIRDS MIGRATING AT MIDNIGHT

DID you ever chance to hear the midnight flight of birds passing through the air and darkness overhead, in countless armies, changing their early or late summer habitat? It is something not to be forgotten. A friend called me up just after 12 last night to mark the peculiar noise of unusually immense flocks migrating north (rather late this year). In the silence, shadow and delicious odor of the hour, (the natural perfume belonging to the night alone,) I thought it rare music. You could *hear* the characteristic motion—once or twice “the rush of mighty wings,” but often a velvety rustle, long drawn out — sometimes quite near — with continual calls and chirps, and some song-notes. It all lasted from 12 till after 3. Once in a while the species was plainly distinguishable; I could make out



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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the bobolink, tanager, Wilson's thrush, white-crown'd sparrow, and occasionally from high in the air came the notes of the plover.

## SUMMER SIGHTS AND INDOLENCES

*June 10th.* — As I write, 5½ P.M., here by the creek, nothing can exceed the quiet splendor and freshness around me. We had a heavy shower, with brief thunder and lightning, in the middle of the day; and since, overhead, one of those not uncommon yet indescribable skies (in quality, not details or forms) of limpid blue, with rolling silver-fringed clouds, and a pure-dazzling sun. For underlay, trees in fulness of tender foliage — liquid, reedy, long-drawn notes of birds — based by the fretful mew-ing of a querulous cat-bird, and the pleasant chippering-shriek of two kingfishers. I have been watching the latter the last half hour, on their regular evening frolic over and in the stream; evidently a spree of the liveliest kind. They pursue each other, whirling and wheeling around, with many

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

a jocund downward dip, splashing the spray in jets of diamonds — and then off they swoop, with slanting wings and graceful flight, sometimes so near me I can plainly see their dark-gray feather-bodies and milk-white necks.

## ME IMPERTURBE

ME imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in  
the midst of irrational things,  
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent  
as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety,  
foibles, crimes, less important than  
I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Man-  
nahatta or the Tennessee, or far  
north or inland,  
A river man, or a man of the woods or of  
any farm-life of these States or of the  
coast, or the lakes or Kanada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-  
balanced for contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule,  
accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and  
animals do.

## THOUGHTS UNDER AN OAK — A DREAM

*June 2.* — This is the fourth day of a dark northeast storm, wind and rain. Day before yesterday was my birthday. I have now enter'd on my sixtieth year. Every day of the storm, protected by overshoes and a waterproof blanket, I regularly come down to the pond, and ensconce myself under the lee of the great oak; I am here now writing these lines. The dark smoke-color'd clouds roll in furious silence athwart the sky; the soft green leaves dangle all around me; the wind steadily keeps up its hoarse, soothing music, over my head — Nature's mighty whisper. Seated here in solitude I have been musing over my life — connecting events, dates, as links of a chain, neither sadly nor cheerily, but somehow, to-day here under the oak, in the rain, in an unusually matter-of-fact spirit.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

But my great oak — sturdy, vital, green — five feet thick at the butt. I sit a great deal near or under him. Then the tulip tree near by — the Apollo of the woods — tall and graceful, yet robust and sinewy, inimitable in hang of foliage and throwing-out of limb; as if the beauteous, vital, leafy creature could walk, if it only would. (I had a sort of dream-trance the other day, in which I saw my favorite trees step out and promenade up, down and around, very curiously — with a whisper from one, leaning down as he pass'd me, *We do all this on the present occasion, exceptionally, just for you.*)

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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## THE LESSON OF A TREE

*September 1.* — I should not take either the biggest or the most picturesque tree to illustrate it. Here is one of my favorites now before me, a fine yellow poplar, quite straight, perhaps ninety feet high, and four thick at the butt. How strong, vital, enduring! how dumbly eloquent! What suggestions of imperturbability and *being*, as against the human trait of mere *seeming*. Then the qualities, almost emotional, palpably artistic, heroic, of a tree; so innocent and harmless, yet so savage. It *is*, yet says nothing. How it rebukes by its tough and equable serenity all weathers, this gusty-temper'd little whiffet, man, that runs indoors at a mite of rain or snow. Science (or rather half-way science) scoffs at reminiscence of dryad and hamadryad, and of trees speaking. But, if they don't, they do as

## THE ROLLING EARTH

---

well as most speaking, writing, poetry, sermons — or rather they do a great deal better. I should say indeed that those old dryad-remiscences are quite as true as any, and profounder than most reminiscences we get. ("Cut this out," as the quack mediciners say, and keep by you.) Go and sit in a grove or woods, with one or more of those voiceless companions, and read the foregoing, and think.

One lesson from affiliating a tree — perhaps the greatest moral lesson anyhow from earth, rocks, animals, is that same lesson of inherency, of *what is*, without the least regard to what the looker-on (the critic) supposes or says, or whether he likes or dislikes. What worse — what more general malady pervades each and all of us, our literature, education, attitude toward each other, (even toward ourselves,) than a morbid trouble about *seems*, (generally temporarily seems too,) and no trouble at all, or hardly any, about the sane, slow-growing,

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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perennial, real parts of character, books, friendship, marriage — humanity's invisible foundations and hold-together? (As the all-basis, the nerve, the great-sympathetic, the plenum within humanity, giving stamp to everything, is necessarily invisible.)

*August 4, 6 P.M.* — Lights and shades and rare effects on tree-foliage and grass — transparent greens, grays, etc., all in sunset pomp and dazzle. The clear beams are now thrown in many new places, on the quilted, seam'd, bronze-drab, lower tree-trunks, shadow'd except at this hour — now flooding their young and old columnar ruggedness with strong light, unfolding to my sense new amazing features of silent, shaggy charm, the solid bark, the expression of harmless impassiveness, with many a bulge and gnarl unreck'd before. In the revealings of such light, such exceptional hour, such mood, one does not wonder at the old story fables, (indeed, why fables?) of people falling into love-sickness with trees, seiz'd

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extatic with the mystic realism of the resistless silent strength in them — *strength*, which after all is perhaps the last, completest, highest beauty.

## THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

AND who art thou? said I to the soft-falling  
    shower,  
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer,  
    as here translated:  
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of  
    the rain,  
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land  
    and the bottomless sea,  
Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd,  
    altogether changed, and yet the same,  
I descend to lave the drouths, atomies,  
    dust-layers of the globe,  
And all that in them without me were seeds  
    only, latent, unborn;  
And forever, by day and night, I give back  
    life to my own origin, and make pure  
    and beautify it:  
(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after  
    fulfilment, wandering,  
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

## THE OAKS AND I

*September 5, '77.* — I write this, 11 A.M., shelter'd under a dense oak by the bank, where I have taken refuge from a sudden rain. I came down here, (we had sulky drizzles all the morning, but an hour ago a lull,) for the before-mention'd daily and simple exercise I am fond of — to pull on that young hickory sapling out there — to sway and yield to its tough-limber upright stem — haply to get into my old sinews some of its elastic fibre and clear sap. I stand on the turf and take these health-pulls moderately and at intervals for nearly an hour, inhaling great draughts of fresh air. Wandering by the creek, I have three or four naturally favorable spots where I rest — besides a chair I lug with me and use for more deliberate occasions. At other spots convenient I have selected, besides



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the hickory just named, strong and limber boughs of beech or holly, in easy-reaching distance, for my natural gymnasia, for arms, chest, trunk-muscles. I can soon feel the sap and sinew rising through me, like mercury to heat. I hold on boughs or slender trees caressingly there in the sun and shade, wrestle with their innocent stalwartness — and *know* the virtue thereof passes from them into me. (Or may-be we interchange — may-be the trees are more aware of it all than I ever thought.)

But now pleasantly imprison'd here under the big oak — the rain dripping, and the sky cover'd with leaden clouds — nothing but the pond on one side, and the other a spread of grass, spotted with the milky blossoms of the wild carrot — the sound of an axe wielded at some distant wood-pile — yet in this dull scene (as most folks would call it) why am I so (almost) happy here and alone? Why would any intrusion, even from people I like, spoil the charm?

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But am I alone? Doubtless there comes a time — perhaps it has come to me — when one feels through his whole being, and pronouncedly the emotional part, that identity between himself subjectively and Nature objectively which Schelling and Fichte are so fond of pressing. How it is I know not, but I often realize a presence here — in clear moods I am certain of it, and neither chemistry nor reasoning nor esthetics will give the least explanation. All the past two summers it has been strengthening and nourishing my sick body and soul, as never before. Thanks, invisible physician, for thy silent delicious medicine, thy day and night, thy waters and thy airs, the banks, the grass, the trees, and e'en the weeds!

## A QUINTETTE

WHILE I have been kept by the rain under the shelter of my great oak, (perfectly dry and comfortable, to the rattle of the drops all around,) I have pencill'd off the mood of the hour in a little quintette, which I will give you:

At vacancy with Nature,  
Acceptive and at ease,  
Distilling the present hour,  
Whatever, wherever it is,  
And over the past, oblivion.

Can you get hold of it, reader dear? and how do you like it anyhow?

## KOSMOS

Who includes diversity and is Nature,  
Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the  
    coarseness and sexuality of the earth,  
    and the great charity of the earth,  
    and the equilibrium also,  
Who has not look'd forth from the windows  
    the eyes for nothing, or whose brain  
    held audience with messengers for  
    nothing,  
Who contains believers and disbelievers,  
    who is the most majestic lover,  
Who holds duly his or her triune proportion  
    of realism, spiritualism, and of the  
    æsthetic or intellectual,  
Who having consider'd the body finds all  
    its organs and parts good,  
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of  
    his or her body understands by subtle  
    analogies all other theories,

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The theory of a city, a poem, and of the  
large politics of these States;

Who believes not only in our globe with its  
sun and moon, but in other globes  
with their suns and moons,

Who, constructing the house of himself or  
herself, not for a day but for all  
time, sees races, eras, dates, genera-  
tions,

The past, the future, dwelling there, like  
space, inseparable together.

## BIRD-WHISTLING

How much music (wild, simple, savage, doubtless, but so tart-sweet), there is in mere whistling. It is four-fifths of the utterance of birds. There are all sorts and styles. For the last half-hour, now, while I have been sitting here, some feather'd fellow away off in the bushes has been repeating over and over again what I may call a kind of throbbing whistle. And now a bird about the robin size has just appear'd, all mulberry red, flitting among the bushes — head, wings, body, deep red, not very bright — no song, as I have heard. *4 o'clock*: There is a real concert going on around me — a dozen different birds pitching in with a will. There have been occasional rains, and the growths all show its vivifying influences. As I finish this, seated on a log close by the pond-edge, much chirping and trill-

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ing in the distance, and a feather'd recluse  
in the woods near by is singing deliciously  
— not many notes, but full of music of  
almost human sympathy — continuing for  
a long, long while.

THOU ORB ALOFT FULL-DAZZLING

THOU orb aloft full-dazzling! thou hot  
October noon!

Flooding with sheeny light the gray beach  
sand,

The sibilant near sea with vistas far and  
foam,

And tawny streaks and shades and spread-  
ing blue;

O sun of noon refulgent! my special word  
to thee.

Hear me illustrious!

Thy lover me, for always I have loved  
thee,

Even as basking babe, then happy boy  
alone by some wood edge, thy  
touching-distant beams enough,

Or man matured, or young or old, as now  
to thee I launch my invocation.



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(Thou canst not with thy dumbness me  
deceive,

I know before the fitting man all Nature  
yields,

Though answering not in words, the skies,  
trees, hear his voice — and thou O  
sun,

As for thy throes, thy perturbations, sud-  
den breaks and shafts of flame gi-  
gantic,

I understand them, I know those flames,  
those perturbations well.)

Thou that with fructifying heat and  
light,

O'er myriad farms, o'er lands and waters  
North and South,

O'er Mississippi's endless course, o'er Texas'  
grassy plains, Kanada's woods,

O'er all the globe that turns its face to thee  
shining in space,

Thou that impartially infoldest all, not only  
continents, seas,

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Thou that to grapes and weeds and little  
    wild flowers givest so liberally,  
Shed, shed thyself on mine and me, with  
    but a fleeting ray out of thy million  
    millions,  
Strike through these chants.

Nor only launch thy subtle dazzle and thy  
    strength for these,  
Prepare the later afternoon of me myself —  
    prepare my lengthening shadows,  
Prepare my starry nights.

## A JANUARY NIGHT

FINE trips across the wide Delaware to-night. Tide pretty high, and a strong ebb. River, a little after 8, full of ice, mostly broken, but some large cakes making our strong-timber'd steamboat hum and quiver as she strikes them. In the clear moonlight they spread, strange, unearthly, silvery, faintly glistening, as far as I can see. Bumping, trembling, sometimes hissing like a thousand snakes, the tide-procession, as we wend with or through it, affording a grand undertone, in keeping with the scene. Overhead, the splendor indescribable; yet something haughty, almost supercilious, in the night. Never did I realize more latent sentiment, almost *passion*, in those silent interminable stars up there. One can understand, such a night, why, from the days of the Pharaohs or Job, the dome of heaven,

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sprinkled with planets, has supplied the subtlest, deepest criticism on human pride, glory, ambition.

## WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged  
    in columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams,  
    to add, divide, and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where  
    he lectured with much applause in  
    the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired  
    and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by  
    myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from  
    time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## FULL-STARR'D NIGHTS

*May 21.* — Back in Camden. Again commencing one of those unusually transparent, full-starr'd, blue-black nights, as if to show that however lush and pompous the day may be, there is something left in the not-day that can outvie it. The rarest, finest sample of long-drawn-out clear-obscure, from sundown to 9 o'clock. I went down to the Delaware, and cross'd and cross'd. Venus like blazing silver well up in the west. The large pale thin crescent of the new moon, half an hour high, sinking languidly under a bar-sinister of cloud, and then emerging. Arcturus right overhead. A faint fragrant sea-odor wafted up from the south. The gloaming, the temper'd coolness, with every feature of the scene, indescribably soothing and tonic — one of those hours that give hints to the soul, impossible

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to put in a statement. (Ah, where would be any food for spirituality without night and the stars?) The vacant spaciousness of the air, and the veil'd blue of the heavens, seem'd miracles enough.

As the night advanc'd it changed its spirit and garments to ampler stateliness. I was almost conscious of a definite presence, Nature silently near. The great constellation of the Water-Serpent stretch'd its coils over more than half the heavens. The Swan with outspread wings was flying down the Milky Way. The northern Crown, the Eagle, Lyra, all up there in their places. From the whole dome shot down points of light, rapport with me, through the clear blue-black. All the usual sense of motion, all animal life, seem'd discarded, seem'd a fiction; a curious power, like the placid rest of Egyptian gods, took possession, none the less potent for being impalpable. Earlier I had seen many bats, balancing in the luminous twilight, darting their black forms

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hither and yon over the river; but now they altogether disappear'd. The evening star and the moon had gone. Alertness and peace lay calmly couching together through the fluid universal shadows.

*August 26.* — Bright has the day been, and my spirits an equal *forzando*. Then comes the night, different, inexpressibly pensive, with its own tender and temper'd splendor. Venus lingers in the west with a voluptuous dazzle unshown hitherto this summer. Mars rises early, and the red sulky moon, two days past her full; Jupiter at night's meridian, and the long curling-slanted Scorpion stretching full view in the south, Aretus-neck'd. Mars walks the heavens lord-paramount now; all through this month I go out after supper and watch for him; sometimes getting up at midnight to take another look at his unparallel'd lustre. . . . Pale and distant, but near in the heavens, Saturn precedes him.



## A CLEAR MIDNIGHT

THIS is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into  
the wordless,  
Away from books, away from art, the day  
erased, the lesson done,  
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing,  
pondering the themes thou lovest  
best,  
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

## HOURS FOR THE SOUL

*July 22, 1878.* — Living down in the country again. A wonderful conjunction of all that goes to make those sometime miracle-hours after sunset — so near and yet so far. Perfect, or nearly perfect days, I notice, are not so very uncommon; but the combinations that make perfect nights are few, even in a life time. We have one of those perfections to-night. Sunset left things pretty clear; the larger stars were visible soon as the shades allow'd. A while after 8, three or four great black clouds suddenly rose, seemingly from different points, and sweeping with broad swirls of wind but no thunder, underspread the orbs from view everywhere, and indicated a violent heat-storm. But without storm, clouds, blackness and all, sped and vanish'd as suddenly as they had risen; and from a little after 9

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till 11 the atmosphere and the whole show above were in that state of exceptional clearness and glory just alluded to. In the northwest turned the Great Dipper with its pointers round the Cynosure. A little south of east the constellation of the Scorpion was fully up, with red Antares glowing in its neck; while dominating, majestic Jupiter swam, an hour and a half risen, in the east — (no moon till after 11). A large part of the sky seem'd just laid in great splashes of phosphorus. You could look deeper in, farther through, than usual; the orbs thick as heads of wheat in a field. Not that there was any special brilliancy either — nothing near as sharp as I have seen of keen winter nights, but a curious general luminousness throughout to sight, sense, and soul. The latter had much to do with it. (I am convinced there are hours of Nature, especially of the atmosphere, mornings and evenings, address'd to the soul. Night transcends, for that purpose, what the proudest day can

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do.) Now, indeed, if never before, the heavens declared the glory of God. It was to the full sky of the Bible, of Arabia, of the prophets, and of the oldest poems. There, in abstraction and stillness, (I had gone off by myself to absorb the scene, to have the spell unbroken,) the copiousness, the removedness, vitality, loose-clear-crowdedness, of that stellar concave spreading overhead, softly absorb'd into me, rising so free, interminably high, stretching east, west, north, south — and I, though but a point in the centre below, embodying all.

As if for the first time, indeed, creation noiselessly sank into and through me its placid and untellable lesson, beyond — O, so infinitely beyond! — anything from art, books, sermons, or from science, old or new. The spirit's hour — religion's hour — the visible suggestion of God in space and time — now once definitely indicated, if never again. The untold pointed at — the heavens all paved with it. The Milky Way, as

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if some superhuman symphony, some ode of universal vagueness, disdaining syllable and sound — a flashing glance of Deity, address'd to the soul. All silently — the indescribable night and stars — far off and silently.

THE DAWN. — *July 23.* — This morning, between one and two hours before sunrise, a spectacle wrought on the same background, yet of quite different beauty and meaning. The moon well up in the heavens, and past her half, is shining brightly — the air and sky of that cynical-clear, Minerva-like quality, virgin cool — not the weight of sentiment or mystery, or passion's ecstasy indefinable — not the religious sense, the varied All, distill'd and sublimated into one, of the night just described. Every star now clear-cut, showing for just what it is, there in the colorless ether. The character of the heralded morning, ineffably sweet and fresh and limpid, but for the esthetic sense alone, and for purity without senti-

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ment. I have itemized the night — but dare I attempt the cloudless dawn? (What subtle tie is this between one's soul and the break of day? Alike, and yet no two nights or mornings show ever exactly alike.) Preceded by an immense star, almost unearthly in its effusion of white splendor, with two or three long unequal spoke-rays of diamond radiance, shedding down through the fresh morning air below — an hour of this, and then the sunrise.

THE EAST. — What a subject for a poem! Indeed, where else a more pregnant, more splendid one? Where one more idealistic-real, more subtle, more sensuous-delicate? The East, answering all lands, all ages, peoples; touching all senses, here, immediate, now — and yet so indescribably far off — such retrospect! The East — long-stretching — so losing itself — the orient, the gardens of Asia, the womb of history and song — forth-issuing all those strange, dim cavalcades —

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Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with  
passion,

Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,  
With sunburnt visage, intense soul and glittering eyes.

Always the East — old, how incalculably  
old! And yet here the same — ours yet,  
fresh as a rose, to every morning, every life,  
to-day — and always will be.

*September 17.* — Another presentation —  
same theme — just before sunrise again,  
(a favorite hour with me). The clear gray  
sky, a faint glow in the dull liver-color of  
the east, the cool fresh odor and the mois-  
ture — the cattle and horses off there graz-  
ing in the fields — the star Venus again,  
two hours high. For sounds, the chirping  
of crickets in the grass, the clarion of chan-  
ticleer, and the distant cawing of an early  
crow. Quietly over the dense fringe of  
cedars and pines rises that dazzling, red,  
transparent disk of flame, and the low sheets  
of white vapor roll and roll into dissolution.

THE MOON. — *May 18.* — I went to bed  
early last night, but found myself waked

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shortly after 12, and, turning awhile, sleepless and mentally feverish, I rose, dress'd myself, sallied forth and walk'd down the lane. The full moon, some three or four hours up — a sprinkle of light and less-light clouds just lazily moving — Jupiter an hour high in the east, and here and there throughout the heavens a random star appearing and disappearing. So beautifully veiled and varied — the air, with that early-summer perfume, not at all damp or raw — at times Luna languidly emerging in richest brightness for minutes, and then partially envelop'd again. Far off a poor whip-poor-will plied his notes incessantly. It was that silent time between 1 and 3.

The rare nocturnal scene, how soon it sooth'd and pacified me! Is there not something about the moon, some relation or reminder, which no poem or literature has yet caught? (In very old and primitive ballads I have come across lines or asides that suggest it.) After a while the clouds



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mostly clear'd, and as the moon swam on, she carried, shimmering and shifting, delicate color-effects of pellucid green and tawny vapor.

*Furthermore. February 19, 1880.* — Just before 10 P.M. cold and entirely clear again, the show overhead, bearing southwest, of wonderful and crowded magnificence. The moon in her third quarter — the clusters of the Hyades and Pleiades, with the planet Mars between — in full crossing sprawl in the sky the great Egyptian X, (Sirius, Procyon, and the main stars in the constellations of the Ship, the Dove, and of Orion); just north of east Boötes, and in his knee Arcturus, an hour high, mounting the heaven, ambitiously large and sparkling, as if he meant to challenge with Sirius the stellar supremacy.

With the sentiment of the stars and moon such nights I get all the free margins and indefiniteness of music or poetry, fused in geometry's utmost exactness.

I OPEN my scuttle at night and see the far-  
sprinkled systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can  
cipher edge but the rim of the farther  
systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding,  
always expanding,  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obedi-  
ently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of supe-  
rior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of  
the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stop-  
page,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath  
or upon their surfaces, were this

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moment reduced back to a pallid  
float, it would not avail in the long  
run,

We should surely bring up again where we  
now stand,

And surely go as much farther, and then  
farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions  
of cubic leagues, do not hazard the  
span or make it impatient,

They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space out-  
side of that,

Count ever so much, there is limitless time  
around that.

*Song of Myself.*

## CLOVER AND HAY PERFUME

*July 3d, 4th, 5th.* — Clear, hot, favorable weather — has been a good summer — the growth of clover and grass now generally mow'd. The familiar delicious perfume fills the barns and lanes. As you go along you see the fields of grayish white slightly tinged with yellow, the loosely stack'd grain, the slow-moving wagons passing, and farmers in the fields with stout boys pitching and loading the sheaves. The corn is about beginning to tassel. All over the middle and southern states the spear-shaped battalia, multitudinous, curving, flaunting — long, glossy, dark-green plumes for the great horseman, earth. I hear the cheery notes of my old acquaintance Tommy quail; but too late for the whip-poor-will, (though I heard one solitary lingerer night before last). I watch the broad majestic flight of a

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turkey-buzzard, sometimes high up, sometimes low enough to see the lines of his form, even his spread quills, in relief against the sky. Once or twice lately I have seen an eagle here at early candle-light flying low.

## MIRACLES

WHY, who makes much of a miracle?  
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,  
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses  
    toward the sky,  
Or wade with naked feet along the beach  
    just in the edge of the water,  
Or stand under trees in the woods,  
Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep  
    in the bed at night with any one I  
    love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in  
    the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive  
    of a summer forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in  
    the air,

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Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of  
stars shining so quiet and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the  
new moon in spring;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me  
miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and  
in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a  
miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth  
is spread with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the  
same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim — the rocks — the  
motion of the waves — the ships  
with men in them.

What stranger miracles are there?

### THREE OF US

*July 14.* — My two kingfishers still haunt the pond. In the bright sun and breeze and perfect temperature of to-day, noon, I am sitting here by one of the gurgling brooks, dipping a French water-pen in the limpid crystal, and using it to write these lines, again watching the feather'd twain, as they fly and sport athwart the water, so close, almost touching into its surface. Indeed there seem to be three of us. For nearly an hour I indolently look and join them while they dart and turn and take their airy gambols, sometimes far up the creek disappearing for a few moments, and then surely returning again, and performing most of their flight within sight of me, as if they knew I appreciated and absorb'd their vitality, spirituality, faithfulness, and the rapid, vanishing, delicate lines of moving



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yet quiet electricity they draw for me across the spread of the grass, the trees, and the blue sky. While the brook babbles, babbles, and the shadows of the boughs dapple in the sunshine around me, and the cool west-by-nor'-west wind faintly sighs in the thick bushes and tree tops.

Among the objects of beauty and interest now beginning to appear quite plentifully in this secluded spot, I notice the humming-bird, the dragon-fly with its wings of slate-color'd gauze, and many varieties of beautiful and plain butterflies, idly flapping among the plants and wild posies. The mullein has shot up out of its nest of broad leaves, to a tall stalk towering sometimes five or six feet high, now studded with knobs of golden blossoms. The milk-weed, (I see a great gorgeous creature of gamboge and black lighting on one as I write,) is in flower, with its delicate red fringe; and there are profuse clusters of a feathery blossom waving in the wind on taper stems. I see

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lots of these and much else in every direction, as I saunter or sit. For the last half hour a bird has persistently kept up a simple, sweet, melodious song, from the bushes. (I have a positive conviction that some of these birds sing, and others fly and flirt about here for my special benefit.)

A CHILD said *What is the grass?* fetching it  
to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not  
know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition,  
out of hopeful green stuff  
woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly  
dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the  
corners, that we may see and remark,  
and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the pro-  
duced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad  
zones and narrow zones,

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Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I  
give them the same, I receive them  
the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut  
hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts  
of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would  
have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from  
offspring taken soon out of their  
mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white  
heads of old mothers,  
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs  
of mouths.

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O I perceive after all so many uttering  
tongues,

And I perceive they do not come from the  
roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the  
dead young men and women,

And the hints about old men and mothers,  
and the offspring taken soon out of  
their laps.

What do you think has become of the  
young and old men?

And what do you think has become of the  
women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no  
death,

And if ever there was it led forward life,  
and does not wait at the end to  
arrest it,

And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

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All goes onward and outward, nothing  
collapses,

And to die is different from what any one  
supposed, and luckier.

*Song of Myself.*

## A JULY AFTERNOON BY THE POND

THE fervent heat, but so much more endurable in this pure air — the white and pink pond-blossoms, with great heart-shaped leaves; the glassy waters of the creek, the banks, with dense bushery, and the picturesque beeches and shade and turf; the tremulous, reedy call of some bird from recesses, breaking the warm, indolent, half-voluptuous silence; an occasional wasp, hornet, honey-bee or bumble (they hover near my hands or face, yet annoy me not, nor I them, as they appear to examine, find nothing, and away they go) — the vast space of the sky overhead so clear, and the buzzard up there sailing his slow whirl in majestic spirals and discs; just over the surface of the pond, two large slate-color'd dragon-flies, with wings of lace, circling and darting and occasionally balancing them-

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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selves quite still, their wings quivering all the time, (are they not showing off for my amusement?) — the pond itself, with the sword-shaped calamus; the water snakes — occasionally a flitting blackbird, with red dabs on his shoulders, as he darts slantingly by — the sounds that bring out the solitude, warmth, light and shade — the quawk of some pond duck — (the crickets and grasshoppers are mute in the noon heat, but I hear the song of the first cicadas;) — then at some distance the rattle and whirr of a reaping machine as the horses draw it on a rapid walk through a rye field on the opposite side of the creek — (what was the yellow or light-brown bird, large as a young hen, with short neck and long-stretch'd legs I just saw, in flapping and awkward flight over there through the trees?) — the prevailing delicate, yet palpable, spicy, grassy, clovery perfume to my nostrils; and over all, encircling all, to my sight and soul, the free space of the sky,



## THE ROLLING EARTH

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transparent and blue — and hovering there in the west, a mass of white-gray fleecy clouds the sailors call “shoals of mackerel” — the sky, with silver swirls like locks of toss’d hair, spreading, expanding — a vast voiceless, formless simulacrum — yet maybe the most real reality and formulator of everything — who knows?

I THINK I could turn and live with animals,  
they are so placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their  
condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep  
for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their  
duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented  
with the mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind  
that lived thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the  
whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I  
accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince  
them plainly in their possession.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and  
negligently drop them?  
Myself moving forward then and now and  
forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and  
with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of  
these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of  
my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now  
go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and  
responsive to my caresses,  
Head high in the forehead, wide between  
the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the  
ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears  
finely cut, flexibly moving.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure  
as we race around and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you,  
stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself  
out-gallop them ?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than  
you.

*Song of Myself.*

## ONE OF THE HUMAN KINKS

How is it that in all the serenity and lonesomeness of solitude, away off here amid the hush of the forest, alone, or as I have found in prairie wilds, or mountain stillness, one is never entirely without the instinct of looking around, (I never am, and others tell me the same of themselves, confidentially,) for somebody to appear, or start up out of the earth, or from behind some tree or rock? Is it a lingering, inherited remains of man's primitive wariness, from the wild animals? or from his savage ancestry far back? It is not at all nervousness or fear. Seems as if something unknown were possibly lurking in those bushes, or solitary places. Nay, it is quite certain there is —  
/ some vital unseen presence.

## COLORS — A CONTRAST

SUCH a play of colors and lights, different seasons, different hours of the day — the lines of the far horizon where the faint-tinged edge of the landscape loses itself in the sky. 'As I slowly hobble up the lane toward day-close, an incomparable sunset shooting in molten sapphire and gold, shaft after shaft, through the ranks of the long-leaved corn, between me and the west.

*Another day.* — The rich dark green of the tulip-trees and the oaks, the gray of the swamp-willows, the dull hues of the sycamores and black-walnuts, the emerald of the cedars (after rain), and the light yellow of the beeches.

GIVE me the splendid silent sun with all  
his beams full-dazzling,  
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red  
from the orchard,  
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass  
grows,  
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd  
grape,  
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me  
serene-moving animals teaching content,  
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high  
plateaus west of the Mississippi, and  
I looking up at the stars,  
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of  
beautiful flowers where I can walk  
undisturb'd,  
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd  
woman of whom I should never  
tire,  
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside

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from the noise of the world a rural  
domestic life,

Give me to warble spontaneous songs re-  
cluse by myself, for my own ears  
only,

Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me  
again O Nature your primal sanities!

*Drum-Taps.*



## STRAW-COLOR'D AND OTHER PSYCHES

*August 4.* — A pretty sight! Where I sit in the shade — a warm day, the sun shining from cloudless skies, the forenoon well advanc'd — I look over a ten-acre field of luxuriant clover-hay, (the second crop) — the livid-ripe red blossoms and dabs of August brown thickly spotting the prevailing dark-green. Over all flutter myriads of light-yellow butterflies, mostly skimming along the surface, dipping and oscillating, giving a curious animation to the scene. The beautiful, spiritual insects! straw-color'd Psyches! Occasionally one of them leaves his mates, and mounts, perhaps spirally, perhaps in a straight line in the air, fluttering up, up, till literally out of sight. In the lane as I came along just now I noticed one spot, ten feet square or so,

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where more than a hundred had collected, holding a revel, a gyration-dance, or butterfly good-time, winding and circling, down and across, but always keeping within the limits. The little creatures have come out all of a sudden the last few days, and are now very plentiful. As I sit outdoors, or walk, I hardly look around without somewhere seeing two (always two) fluttering through the air in amorous dalliance. Then their inimitable color, their fragility, peculiar motion — and that strange, frequent way of one leaving the crowd and mounting up, up in the free ether, and apparently never returning. As I look over the field, these yellow-wings everywhere mildly sparkling, many snowy blossoms of the wild carrot gracefully bending on their tall and taper stems — while for sounds, the distant guttural screech of a flock of guineahens comes shrilly yet somehow musically to my ears. And now a faint growl of heat-thunder in the north — and ever the low

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rising and falling wind-purr from the tops of the maples and willows.

*August 20.* — Butterflies and butterflies, (taking the place of the bumble-bees of three months since, who have quite disappear'd,) continue to flit to and fro, all sorts, white, yellow, brown, purple — now and then some gorgeous fellow flashing lazily by on wings like artists' palettes dabb'd with every color. Over the breast of the pond I notice many white ones, crossing, pursuing their idle capricious flight. Near where I sit grows a tall-stemm'd weed topt with a profusion of rich scarlet blossoms, on which the snowy insects alight and dally, sometimes four or five of them at a time. By-and-by a humming-bird visits the same, and I watch him coming and going, daintily balancing and shimmering about. These white butterflies give new beautiful contrasts to the pure greens of the August foliage, (we have had some copious rains lately,) and over the glistening bronze of the pond-sur-

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face. You can tame even such insects; I have one big and handsome moth down here, knows and comes to me, likes me to hold him up on my extended hand.

*Another Day, later.* — A grand twelve-acre field of ripe cabbages with their prevailing hue of malachite green, and floating-flying over and among them in all directions myriads of these same white butterflies. As I came up the lane to-day I saw a living globe of the same, two or three feet in diameter, many scores cluster'd together and rolling along in the air, adhering to their ball-shape, six or eight feet above the ground.

## WITH HUSKY-HAUGHTY LIPS, O SEA !

WITH husky-haughty lips, O sea!  
Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat  
    shore,  
Imaging to my sense thy varied strange  
    suggestions,  
(I see and plainly list thy talk and confer-  
    ence here,)  
Thy troops of white-maned racers racing  
    to the goal,  
Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the  
    sparkling dimples of the sun,  
Thy brooding scowl and murk — thy un-  
    loos'd hurricanes,  
Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;  
Great as thou art above the rest, thy many  
    tears — a lack from all eternity in  
    thy content,  
(Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs,  
    defeats, could make thee greatest —  
    no less could make thee,)

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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Thy lonely state — something thou ever  
    seek'st and seek'st, yet never gain'st,  
Surely some right withheld — some voice,  
    in huge monotonous rage, of free-  
    dom-lover pent,  
Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd  
    and chafing in those breakers,  
By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and pant-  
    ing breath,  
And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and  
    waves,  
And serpent hiss, and savage peals of  
    laughter,  
And undertones of distant lion roar,  
(Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear  
    — but now, rapport for once,  
A phantom in the night thy confidant for  
    once,)  
The first and last confession of the globe,  
Outsurging, muttering from thy soul's  
    abysms,  
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,  
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

## SEA-SHORE FANCIES

EVEN as a boy, I had the fancy, the wish, to write a piece, perhaps a poem, about the sea-shore — that suggesting, dividing line, contact, junction, the solid marrying the liquid — that curious, lurking something, (as doubtless every objective form finally becomes to the subjective spirit,) which means far more than its mere first sight, grand as that is — blending the real and ideal, and each made portion of the other. Hours, days, in my Long Island youth and early manhood, I haunted the shores of Rockaway or Coney island, or away east to the Hamptons or Montauk. Once, at the latter place, (by the old lighthouse, nothing but sea-tossings in sight in every direction as far as the eye could reach,) I remember well, I felt that I must one day write a book expressing this liquid, mystic

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theme. Afterward, I recollect, how it came to me that instead of any special lyrical or epical or literary attempt, the sea-shore should be an invisible *influence*, a pervading gauge and tally for me, in my composition. (Let me give a hint here to young writers. I am not sure but I have unwittingly follow'd out the same rule with other powers besides sea and shores — avoiding them, in the way of any dead set at poetizing them, as too big for formal handling — quite satisfied if I could indirectly show that we have met and fused, even if only once, but enough — that we have really absorb'd each other and understand each other.)

There is a dream, a picture, that for years at intervals, (sometimes quite long ones, but surely again, in time,) has come noiselessly up before me, and I really believe, fiction as it is, has enter'd largely into my practical life — certainly into my writings, and shaped and color'd them. It is nothing more or less than a stretch of interminable



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white-brown sand, hard and smooth and broad, with the ocean perpetually, grandly, rolling in upon it, with slow-measured sweep, with rustle and hiss and foam, and many a thump as of low bass drums. This scene, this picture, I say, has risen before me at times for years. Sometimes I wake at night and can hear and see it plainly.

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

ON the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds,  
    in black masses spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down  
    the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet  
    left in the east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand  
    of her father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious  
    soon to devour all,  
Watching, silently weeps.

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be vic-  
torious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they  
devour the stars only in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch  
again another night, the Pleiades  
shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both  
silvery and golden shall shine out  
again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall  
shine out again, they endure,  
The vast immortal suns and the long-  
enduring pensive moons shall again  
shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for  
Jupiter ?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the  
stars ?

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I  
whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem  
and indirection,)  
Something there is more immortal even than  
the stars,  
(Many the burials, many the days and  
nights, passing away,)  
Something that shall endure longer even  
than lustrous Jupiter,  
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

## A WINTER DAY ON THE SEA-BEACH

ONE bright December mid-day lately I spent down on the New Jersey sea-shore, reaching it by a little more than an hour's railroad trip over the old Camden and Atlantic. . . . Five or six miles at the last, our track enter'd a broad region of salt grass meadows, intersected by lagoons, and cut up everywhere by watery runs. The sedgy perfume, delightful to my nostrils, reminded me of "the mash" and south bay of my native island. I could have journey'd contentedly till night through these flat and odorous sea-prairies. From half-past 11 till 2 I was nearly all the time along the beach, or in sight of the ocean, listening to its hoarse murmur, and inhaling the bracing and welcome breezes. First, a rapid five-mile drive over the hard sand — our carriage wheels hardly made dents in it. Then

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after dinner (as there were nearly two hours to spare) I walk'd off in another direction, (hardly met or saw a person,) and taking possession of what appear'd to have been the reception-room of an old bath-house range, had a broad expanse of view all to myself — quaint, refreshing, unimpeded — a dry area of sedge and Indian grass immediately before and around me — space, simple, unornamented space. Distant vessels, and the far-off, just visible, trailing smoke of an inward bound steamer; more plainly, ships, brigs, schooners, in sight, most of them with every sail set to the firm and steady wind.

The attractions, fascinations there are in sea and shore! How one dwells on their simplicity, even vacuity! What is it in us, arous'd by those indirections and directions? That spread of waves and gray-white beach, salt, monotonous, senseless — such an entire absence of art, books, talk, elegance — so indescribably comforting,

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even this winter day — grim, yet so delicate-looking, so spiritual — striking emotional, impalpable depths, subtler than all the poems, paintings, music, I have ever read, seen, heard. (Yet let me be fair, perhaps it is because I have read those poems and heard that music.)

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

ON the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro  
    singing her husky song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think  
    a thought of the clef of the universes  
    and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,  
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large,  
    suns, moons, planets,  
All distances of place however wide,  
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,  
All souls, all living bodies though they  
    be ever so different, or in different  
    worlds,  
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral  
    processes, the fishes, the brutes,  
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civiliza-  
    tions, languages,



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All identities that have existed or may exist  
on this globe, or any globe,  
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present,  
future,  
This vast similitude spans them, and always  
has spann'd,  
And shall forever span them and compactly  
hold and enclose them.

## MULLEINS AND MULLEINS

LARGE, placid mulleins, as summer advances, velvety in texture, of a light greenish-drab color, growing everywhere in the fields — at first earth's big rosettes in their broad-leav'd low cluster-plants, eight, ten, twenty leaves to a plant — plentiful on the fallow twenty-acre lot, at the end of the lane, and especially by the ridge-sides of the fences — then close to the ground, but soon springing up — leaves as broad as my hand, and the lower ones twice as long — so fresh and dewy in the morning — stalks now four or five, even seven or eight feet high. The farmers, I find, think the mullein a mean unworthy weed, but I have grown to a fondness for it. Every object has its lesson, enclosing the suggestion of everything else — and lately I sometimes think all is concentrated for me in these hardy,

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yellow-flower'd weeds. As I come down the lane early in the morning, I pause before their soft wool-like fleece and stem and broad leaves, glittering with countless diamonds. Annually for three summers now, they and I have silently return'd together; at such long intervals I stand or sit among them, musing — and woven with the rest, of so many hours and moods of partial rehabilitation — of my sane or sick spirit, here as near at peace as it can be.

OXEN that rattle the yoke and chain or halt  
in the leafy shade, what is that you  
express in your eyes?

It seems to me more than all the print I  
have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-  
duck on my distant and day-long  
ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle  
around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, play-  
ing within me,  
And consider green and violet and the  
tufted crown intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy be-  
cause she is not something else,

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And the jay in the woods never studied  
the gamut, yet trills pretty well to  
me,

And the look of the bay mare shames  
silliness out of me.

*Song of Myself.*

## TO THE SPRING AND BROOK

So, still sauntering on, to the spring under the willows — musical as soft clinking glasses — pouring a sizeable stream, thick as my neck, pure and clear, out from its vent where the bank arches over like a great brown shaggy eyebrow or mouth-roof — gurgling, gurgling ceaselessly — meaning, saying something, of course (if one could only translate it) — always gurgling there, the whole year through — never giving out — oceans of mint, blackberries in summer — choice of light and shade — just the place for my July sun-baths and water-baths too — but mainly the inimitable soft sound-gurgles of it, as I sit there hot afternoons. How they and all grow into me, day after day — everything in keeping — the wild, just-palpable perfume, and the dappled leaf-shadows, and

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all the natural-medicinal, elemental-moral influences of the spot.

Babble on, O brook, with that utterance of thine! I too will express what I have gather'd in my days and progress, native, subterranean, past — and now, thee. Spin and wind thy way — I with thee, a little while, at any rate. As I haunt thee so often, season by season, thou knowest, reckest not me, (yet why be so certain? who can tell?) — but I will learn from thee, and dwell on thee — receive, copy, print from thee.

THERE is something that comes to one now  
and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed,  
it eludes discussion and print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this  
book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther  
from you than your hearing  
and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest,  
it is ever provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read  
nothing about it,  
You may read the President's message and  
read nothing about it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department  
or Treasury department,  
or in the daily papers or weekly  
papers,



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Or in the census or revenue returns, prices  
current, or any accounts of stock.

The sun and stars that float in the open  
air,

The apple-shaped earth and we upon it,  
surely the drift of them is something  
grand,

I do not know what it is except that it is  
grand, and that it is happiness,

And that the enclosing purport of us here  
is not a speculation or bon-mot or  
reconnoissance,

And that it is not something which by luck  
may turn out well for us, and with-  
out luck must be a failure for us,

And not something which may yet be re-  
tracted in a certain contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of  
body and identity, the greed that  
with perfect complaisance devours  
all things,

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The endless pride and outstretching of man,  
unspeakable joys and sorrows,

The wonder every one sees in every one  
else he sees, and the wonders that  
fill each minute of time forever,

What have you reckon'd them for, camarado?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or  
farm-work? or for the profits of your  
store?

Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill  
a gentleman's leisure, or a lady's  
leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took  
substance and form that it might be  
painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be  
written of, and songs sung?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great  
laws and harmonious combinations  
and the fluids of the air, as subjects  
for the savans?

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Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps  
and charts?

Or the stars to be put in constellations and  
named fancy names?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural  
tables, or agriculture itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, leg-  
ends, collections, and the practice  
handed along in manufactures, will  
we rate them so high?

Will we rate our cash and business high?  
I have no objection,

I rate them as high as the highest — then  
a child born of a woman and man  
I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Con-  
stitution grand,

I do not say they are not grand and good,  
for they are,

I am this day just as much in love with  
them as you,

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Then I am in love with You, and with all  
my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine —

I do not say they are not divine,

I say they have all grown out of you, and  
may grow out of you still,

It is not they who give the life, it is you  
who give the life,

Leaves are not more shed from the trees,  
or trees from the earth, than they  
are shed out of you.

*A Song for Occupations.*

## MATURE SUMMER DAYS AND NIGHTS

*August 4.* — Forenoon — as I sit under the willow shade, (have retreated down in the country again,) a little bird is leisurely dousing and flirting himself amid the brook almost within reach of me. He evidently fears me not — takes me for some concomitant of the neighboring earthy banks, free bushery and wild weeds. *6 p. m.* — The last three days have been perfect ones for the season, (four nights ago copious rains, with vehement thunder and lightning). I write this sitting by the creek watching my two kingfishers at their sun-down sport. The strong, beautiful, joyous creatures! Their wings glisten in the slanted sunbeams as they circle and circle around, occasionally dipping and dashing the water, and making long stretches up and down the creek. Wherever I go over fields,

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through lanes, in by-places, blooms the  
white-flowering wild-carrot, its delicate pat  
of snow-flakes crowning its slender stem,  
gracefully oscillating in the breeze.

## THE COMMONPLACE

THE commonplace I sing;  
How cheap is health! how cheap nobility!  
Abstinence, no falsehood, no gluttony, lust;  
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,  
(Take here the mainest lesson — less from  
books — less from the schools,)  
The common day and night — the common  
earth and waters,  
Your farm — your work, trade, occupa-  
tion,  
The democratic wisdom underneath, like  
solid ground for all.

## LOCUSTS AND KATYDIDS

*August 22.*—Reedy monotonous of locust, or sounds of katydid — I hear the latter at night, and the other both day and night. I thought the morning and evening warble of birds delightful; but I find I can listen to these strange insects with just as much pleasure. A single locust is now heard near noon from a tree two hundred feet off, as I write — a long whirring, continued, quite loud noise graded in distinct whirls, or swinging circles, increasing in strength and rapidity up to a certain point, and then a fluttering, quietly tapering fall. Each strain is continued from one to two minutes. The locust-song is very appropriate to the scene — gushes, has meaning, is masculine, is like some fine old wine, not sweet, but far better than sweet.



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But the katydid — how shall I describe its piquant utterances? One sings from a willow-tree just outside my open bedroom window, twenty yards distant; every clear night for a fortnight past has sooth'd me to sleep. I rode through a piece of woods for a hundred rods the other evening, and heard the katydids by myriads — very curious for once; but I like better my single neighbor on the tree.

Let me say more about the song of the locust, even to repetition; a long, chromatic, tremulous crescendo, like a brass disk whirling round and round, emitting wave after wave of notes, beginning with a certain moderate beat or measure, rapidly increasing in speed and emphasis, reaching a point of great energy and significance, and then quickly and gracefully dropping down and out. Not the melody of the singing-bird — far from it; the common musician might think without melody, but surely having to the finer ear a harmony of its own; monotonous

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— but what a swing there is in that brassy drone, round and round, cymballine — or like the whirling of brass quoits.

## A SUN-BATH — NAKEDNESS

*Sunday, August 27.* — Another day quite free from mark'd prostration and pain. It seems indeed as if peace, and nutriment from heaven subtly filter into me as I slowly hobble down these country lanes and across fields, in the good air — as I sit here in solitude with Nature — open, voiceless, mystic, far removed, yet palpable, eloquent Nature. I merge myself in the scene, in the perfect day. Hovering over the clear brook-water, I am sooth'd by its soft gurgle in one place, and the hoarser murmurs of its three-foot fall in another. Come, ye disconsolate, in whom any latent eligibility is left — come get the sure virtues of creek-shore, and wood and field. Two months (July and August, '77,) have I absorb'd them, and they begin to make a new man of me. Every day, seclusion — every day at least two or three

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hours of freedom, bathing, no talk, no bonds, no dress, no books, no *manners*.

Shall I tell you, reader, to what I attribute my already much-restored health? That I have been almost two years, off and on, without drugs and medicines, and daily in the open air. Last summer I found a particularly secluded little dell off one side by my creek, originally a large dug-out marl-pit, now abandon'd, fill'd, with bushes, trees, grass, a group of willows, a straggling bank, and a spring of delicious water running right through the middle of it, with two or three little cascades. Here I retreated every hot day, and follow it up this summer. Here I realize the meaning of that old fellow who said he was seldom less alone than when alone. Never before did I get so close to Nature; never before did she come so close to me. By old habit, I pencill'd down from time to time, almost automatically, moods, sights, hours, tints and outlines, on the spot. Let me specially

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record the satisfaction of this current forenoon, so serene and primitive, so conventionally exceptional, natural.

An hour or so after breakfast, I wended my way down to the recesses of the afore-said dell, which I and certain thrushes, cat-birds, &c., had all to ourselves. A light south-west wind was blowing through the tree-tops. It was just the place and time for my Adamic air-bath and flesh-brushing from head to foot. So hanging clothes on a rail near by, keeping old broadbrim straw on head and easy shoes on feet, hav n't I had a good time the last two hours! First with the stiff-elastic bristles rasping arms, breast, sides, till they turn'd scarlet — then partially bathing in the clear waters of the running brook — taking everything very leisurely, with many rests and pauses — stepping about barefooted every few minutes now and then in some neighboring black ooze, for unctuous mud-bath to my feet — a brief second and third rinsing in

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the crystal running waters — rubbing with the fragrant towel — slow negligent promenades on the turf up and down in the sun, varied with occasional rests, and further frictions of the bristle-brush — sometimes carrying my portable chair with me from place to place, as my range is quite extensive here, nearly a hundred rods, feeling quite secure from intrusion, (and that indeed I am not at all nervous about, if it accidentally happens).

As I walk'd slowly over the grass, the sun shone out enough to show the shadow moving with me. Somehow I seem'd to get identity with each and every thing around me, in its condition. Nature was naked, and I was also. It was too lazy, soothing, and joyous-equable to speculate about. Yet I might have thought somehow in this vein: Perhaps the inner never-lost rapport we hold with earth, light, air, trees, &c., is not to be realized through eyes and mind only, but through the whole corporeal body,

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which I will not have blinded or bandaged any more than the eyes. Sweet, sane, still Nakedness in Nature! — ah if poor, sick, prurient humanity in cities might really know you once more! Is not nakedness then indecent? No, not inherently. It is your thought, your sophistication, your fear, your respectability, that is indecent. There come moods when these clothes of ours are not only too irksome to wear, but are themselves indecent. Perhaps indeed he or she to whom the free exhilarating extasy of nakedness in Nature has never been eligible (and how many thousands there are!) has not really known what purity is — nor what faith or art or health really is. (Probably the whole curriculum of first-class philosophy, beauty, heroism, form, illustrated by the old Hellenic race — the highest height and deepest depth known to civilization in those departments — came from their natural and religious idea of Nakedness.)

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Many such hours, from time to time, the last two summers — I attribute my partial rehabilitation largely to them. Some good people may think it a feeble or half-crack'd way of spending one's time and thinking. May-be it is.



## SUPPLEMENT HOURS

SANE, random, negligent hours,  
Sane, easy, culminating hours,  
After the flush, the Indian summer, of my  
    life,  
Away from Books — away from Art — the  
    lesson learn'd, pass'd o'er.  
Soothing, bathing, merging all — the sane,  
    magnetic,  
Now for the day and night themselves —  
    the open air,  
Now for the fields, the seasons, insects,  
    trees — the rain and snow,  
Where wild bees flitting hum,  
Or August mulleins grow, or winter's snow-  
    flakes fall,  
Or stars in the skies roll round —  
The silent sun and stars.

## WILD FLOWERS

THIS has been and is yet a great season for wild flowers; oceans of them line the roads through the woods, border the edges of the water-runlets, grow all along the old fences, and are scatter'd in profusion over the fields. An eight-petal'd blossom of gold-yellow, clear and bright, with a brown tuft in the middle, nearly as large as a silver half-dollar, is very common; yesterday on a long drive I noticed it thickly lining the borders of the brooks everywhere. Then there is a beautiful weed cover'd with blue flowers, (the blue of the old Chinese teacups treasur'd by our grand aunts,) I am continually stopping to admire — a little larger than a dime, and very plentiful. White, however, is the prevailing color. The wild carrot I have spoken of; also the fragrant life-ever-lasting. But there are all hues and beauties,

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especially on the frequent tracts of half-opened scrub-oak and dwarf cedar hereabout — wild asters of all colors. Notwithstanding the frost-touch the hardy little chaps maintain themselves in all their bloom. The tree-leaves, too, some of them are beginning to turn yellow or drab or dull green. The deep wine-color of the sumachs and gum-trees is already visible, and the straw-color of the dog-wood and beech.

## ENTERING A LONG FARM-LANE

As every man has his hobby-liking, mine is for a real farm-lane fenced by old chestnut-rails gray-green with dabs of moss and lichen, copious weeds and briers growing in spots athwart the heaps of stray-pick'd stones at the fence bases — irregular paths worn between, and horse and cow tracks — all characteristic accompaniments marking and scenting the neighborhood in their seasons — apple-tree blossoms in forward April — pigs, poultry, a field of August buckwheat, and in another the long flapping tassels of maize — and so to the pond, the expansion of the creek, the secluded-beautiful, with young and old trees, and such recesses and vistas.

## HALCYON DAYS

Not from successful love alone,  
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor  
    victories of politics or war;  
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent  
    passions calm,  
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the  
    evening sky,  
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame,  
    like freshier, balmier air,  
As the days take on a mellower light, and  
    the apple at last hangs really finish'd  
    and indolent-ripe on the tree,  
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest  
    days of all!  
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

## DISTANT SOUNDS

THE axe of the wood-cutter, the measured thud of a single threshing-flail, the crowing of chanticléer in the barn-yard, (with invariable responses from other barn-yards,) and the lowing of cattle — but most of all, or far or near, the wind — through the high tree-tops, or through low bushes, laving one's face and hands so gently, this balmy-bright noon, the coolest for a long time, (Sept. 2) — I will not call it *sighing*, for to me it is always a firm, sane, cheery expression, through a monotone, giving many varieties, or swift or slow, or dense or delicate. The wind in the patch of pine woods off there — how sibilant. Or at sea, I can imagine it this moment, tossing the waves, with spirits of foam flying far, and the free whistle, and the scent of the salt — and that vast paradox somehow with all its

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action and restlessness conveying a sense of eternal rest.

*Other adjuncts.* — But the sun and the moon here and these times. As never more wonderful by day, the gorgeous orb imperial, so vast, so ardently, lovingly hot — so never a more glorious moon of nights, especially the last three or four. The great planets too — Mars never before so flaming bright, so flashing-large, with slight yellow tinge, (the astronomers say — is it true? — nearer to us than any time the past century) — and well up, lord Jupiter, (a little while since close by the moon) — and in the west, after the sun sinks, voluptuous Venus, now languid and shorn of her beams, as if from some divine excess.

## AUTUMN SIDE-BITS

*September 20.* — Under an old black oak, glossy and green, exhaling aroma — amid a grove the Aëbic druids might have chosen — envelop'd in the warmth and light of the noonday sun, and swarms of flitting insects — with the harsh cawing of many crows a hundred rods away — here I sit in solitude, absorbing, enjoying all. The corn, stack'd in its cone-shaped stacks, russet-color'd and sere — a large field spotted thick with scarlet-gold pumpkins — an adjoining one of cabbages, showing well in their green and pearl, mottled by much light and shade — melon patches, with their bulging ovals, and great silver-streak'd, ruffled, broad-edged leaves — and many an autumn sight and sound beside — the distant scream of a flock of guinea-hens — and pour'd over all the September breeze,



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with pensive cadence through the tree tops.

*Another Day.* — The ground in all directions strew'd with *débris* from a storm. Timber creek, as I slowly pace its banks, has ebb'd low, and shows reaction from the turbulent swell of the late *équinoctial*. As I look around, I take account of stock — weeds and shrubs, knolls, paths, occasional stumps, some with smooth'd tops, (several I use as seats of rest, from place to place, and from one I am now jotting these lines,) — frequent wild-flowers, little white, star-shaped things, or the cardinal red of the lobelia, or the cherry-ball seeds of the perennial rose, or the many-threaded vines winding up and around trunks of trees.

*October 1, 2, and 3.* — Down every day in the solitude of the creek. A serene autumn sun and westerly breeze to-day (3d) as I sit here, the water surface prettily moving in wind-ripples before me. On a stout old beech at the edge, decayed and slanting,

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almost fallen to the stream, yet with life and leaves in its mossy limbs, a gray squirrel, exploring, runs up and down, flirts his tail, leaps to the ground, sits on his haunches upright as he sees me, (a Darwinian hint?) and then races up the tree again.

*October 4.* ☁ Cloudy and coolish; signs of incipient winter. Yet pleasant here, the leaves thick-falling, the ground brown with them already; rich coloring, yellows of all hues, pale and dark-green, shades from lightest to richest red — all set in and toned down by the prevailing brown of the earth and gray of the sky. So, winter is coming; and I yet in my sickness. I sit here amid all these fair sights and vital influences, and abandon myself to that thought, with its wandering trains of speculation.

FOR the lands and for these passionate days  
and for myself,  
Now I awhile retire to thee O soil of autumn  
fields,  
Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to  
thee,  
Answering the pulses of thy sane and  
equable heart,  
Tuning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice, confide to me a  
voice,  
O harvest of my lands — O boundless summer  
growths,  
O lavish brown parturient earth — O infinite  
teeming womb,  
A song to narrate thee.

Ever upon this stage,  
Is acted God's calm annual drama,  
Gorgeous processions, songs of birds,

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Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most  
the soul,  
The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore,  
the musical, strong waves,  
The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender,  
tapering trees,  
The liliput countless armies of the grass,  
The heat, the showers, the measureless  
pasturages,  
The scenery of the snows, the winds' free  
orchestra,  
The stretching light-hung roof of clouds,  
the clear cerulean and the silvery  
fringes,  
The high dilating stars, the placid beckon-  
ing stars,  
The moving flocks and herds, the plains  
and emerald meadows,  
The shows of all the varied lands and all  
the growths and products.

*The Return of the Heroes.*

## THE SKY — DAYS AND NIGHTS — HAPPINESS

*October 20.* — A clear, crispy day — dry and breezy air, full of oxygen. Out of the sane, silent, beauteous miracles that envelope and fuse me — trees, water, grass, sunlight, and early frost — the one I am looking at most to-day is the sky. It has that delicate, transparent blue, peculiar to autumn, and the only clouds are little or larger white ones, giving their still and spiritual motion to the great concave. All through the earlier day (say from 7 to 11) it keeps a pure, yet vivid blue. But as noon approaches the color gets lighter, quite gray for two or three hours — then still paler for a spell, till sun-down — which last I watch dazzling through the interstices of a knoll of big trees — darts of fire and a gorgeous show of light-yellow, liver-color and red,

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with a vast silver glaze askant on the water — the transparent shadows, shafts, sparkle, and vivid colors beyond all the paintings ever made.

I don't know what or how, but it seems to me mostly owing to these skies, (every now and then I think, while I have of course seen them every day of my life, I never really saw the skies before,) have had this autumn some wondrously contented hours — may I not say perfectly happy ones? As I have read, Byron just before his death told a friend that he had known but three happy hours during his whole existence. Then there is the old German legend of the king's bell, to the same point. While I was out there by the wood, that beautiful sunset through the trees, I thought of Byron's and the bell story, and the notion started in me that I was having a happy hour. (Though perhaps my best moments I never jot down; when they come I cannot afford to break the charm by inditing memoranda.

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I just abandon myself to the mood, and let it float on, carrying me in its placid extasy.)

What is happiness, anyhow? Is this one of its hours, or the like of it? — so impalpable — a mere breath, an evanescent tinge? I am not sure — so let me give myself the benefit of the doubt. Hast Thou, pellucid, in Thy azure depths, medicine for case like mine? (Ah, the physical shatter and troubled spirit of me the last three years.) And dost Thou subtly mystically now drip it through the air invisibly upon me?

*Night of October 28.* — The heavens unusually transparent — the stars out by myriads — the great path of the Milky Way, with its branch, only seen of very clear nights — Jupiter, setting in the west, looks like a huge hap-hazard splash, and has a little star for companion.

Clothed in his white garments,  
Into the round and clear arena slowly entered the  
brahmin,

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Holding a little child by the hand,  
Like the moon with the planet Jupiter in a cloud-  
less night-sky.

*Old Hindu Poem.*

*Early in November.* — At its farther end the lane already described opens into a broad grassy upland field of over twenty acres, slightly sloping to the south. Here I am accustom'd to walk for sky views and effects, either morning or sundown. To-day from this field my soul is calm'd and expanded beyond description, the whole forenoon by the clear blue arching over all, cloudless, nothing particular, only sky and daylight. Their soothing accompaniments, autumn leaves, the cool dry air, the faint aroma — crows cawing in the distance — two great buzzards wheeling gracefully and slowly far up there — the occasional murmur of the wind, sometimes quite gently, then threatening through the trees — a gang of farm-laborers loading cornstalks in a field in sight, and the patient horses waiting.



## TO THE SUN-SET BREEZE

Ah, whispering, something again, unseen,  
Where late this heated day thou enterest  
at my window, door,  
Thou, laving, tempering all, cool-freshing,  
gently vitalizing  
Me, old, alone, sick, weak-down, melted-  
worn with sweat;  
Thou, nestling, folding close and firm yet  
soft, companion better than talk,  
book, art,  
(Thou hast, O Nature! elements! utterance  
to my heart beyond the rest — and  
this is of them,)  
So sweet thy primitive taste to breathe  
within — thy soothing fingers on my  
face and hands,  
Thou, messenger-magical strange bringer to  
body and spirit of me,  
(Distances balk'd — occult medicines pene-  
trating me from head to foot,)

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I feel the sky, the prairies vast — I feel the  
mighty northern lakes,

I feel the ocean and the forest — somehow  
I feel the globe itself swift-swim-  
ming in space;

Thou blown from lips so loved, now gone —  
haply from endless store, God-sent,  
(For thou art spiritual, Godly, most of all  
known to my sense,)

Minister to speak to me, here and now,  
what word has never told, and can-  
not tell,

Art thou not universal concrete's distilla-  
tion? Law's, all Astronomy's last  
refinement?

Hast thou no soul? Can I not know, iden-  
tify thee?

## SUNDOWN LIGHTS

*May 6, 5 P.M.* — This is the hour for strange effects in light and shade — enough to make a colorist go delirious — long spokes of molten silver sent horizontally through the trees (now in their brightest tenderest green,) each leaf and branch of endless foliage a lit-up miracle, then lying all prone on the youthful-ripe, interminable grass, and giving the blades not only aggregate but individual splendor, in ways unknown to any other hour. I have particular spots where I get these effects in their perfection. One broad splash lies on the water, with many a rippling twinkle, offset by the rapidly deepening black-green murky-transparent shadows behind, and at intervals all along the banks. These, with great shafts of horizontal fire thrown among the trees and along the grass as the sun lowers,

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give effects more and more peculiar, more and more superb, unearthly, rich and dazzling.

## SUNDOWN PERFUME — QUAIL-NOTES — THE HERMIT-THRUSH

*June 19th, 4 to 6½, P.M.* — Sitting alone by the creek — solitude here, but the scene bright and vivid enough — the sun shining, and quite a fresh wind blowing (some heavy showers last night,) the grass and trees looking their best — the clare-obscure of different greens, shadows, half-shadows, and the dappling glimpses of the water, through recesses — the wild flageolet-note of a quail near by — the just-heard fretting of some hylas down there in the pond — crows cawing in the distance — a drove of young hogs rooting in soft ground near the oak under which I sit — some come sniffing near me, and then scamper away, with grunts. And still the clear notes of the quail — the quiver of leaf-shadows over the paper as I write — the sky aloft, with white

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clouds, and the sun well declining to the west — the swift darting of many sand-swallows coming and going, their holes in a neighboring marl-bank — the odor of the cedar and oak, so palpable, as evening approaches — perfume, color, the bronze-and-gold of nearly ripen'd wheat — clover-fields, with honey-scent — the well-up maize, with long and rustling leaves — the great patches of thriving potatoes, dusky green, fleck'd all over with white blossoms — the old, warty, venerable oak above me — and ever, mix'd with the dual notes of the quail, the sougning of the wind through some near-by pines.

As I rise for return, I linger long to a delicious song-epilogue (is it the hermit-thrush?) from some bushy recess off there in the swamp, repeated leisurely and pensively over and over again. This, to the circle-gambols of the swallows flying by dozens in concentric rings in the last rays of sunset, like flashes of some airy wheel.

## SONG AT SUNSET

SPLENDOR of ended day floating and filling  
me,  
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,  
Inflating my throat, you divine average,  
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I  
sing.

Open mouth of my soul uttering gladness,  
Eyes of my soul seeing perfection,  
Natural life of me faithfully praising things,  
Corroborating forever the triumph of  
things.

Illustrious every one!  
Illustrious what we name space, sphere of  
unnumber'd spirits,  
Illustrious the mystery of motion in all  
beings, even the tiniest insect,  
Illustrious the attribute of speech, the  
senses, the body,

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Illustrious the passing light — illustrious  
the pale reflection on the new moon  
in the western sky,  
Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch,  
to the last.

Good in all,  
In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,  
In the annual return of the seasons,  
In the hilarity of youth,  
In the strength and flush of manhood,  
In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age,  
In the superb vistas of death.

Wonderful to depart!  
Wonderful to be here!  
The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent  
blood!  
To breathe the air, how delicious!  
To speak — to walk — to seize something  
by the hand!  
To prepare for sleep, for bed, to look on my  
rose-color'd flesh!



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To be conscious of my body, so satisfied, so  
large!

To be this incredible God I am!

To have gone forth among other Gods,  
these men and women I love.

Wonderful how I celebrate ~~y~~ou and myself!  
How my thoughts play subtly at the spec-  
tacles around!

How the clouds pass silently overhead!

How the earth darts on and on! and how  
the sun, moon, stars, dart on and on!

How the water sports and sings! (surely it  
is alive!)

How the trees rise and stand up, with strong  
trunks, with branches and leaves!

(Surely there is something more in each of  
the trees, some living soul.)

O amazement of things — even the least  
particle!

O spirituality of things!

O strain musical flowing through ages and

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continents, now reaching me and  
America!

I take your strong chords, intersperse them,  
and cheerfully pass them forward.

I too carol the sun, usher'd or at noon, or as  
now, setting,

I too throb to the brain and beauty of the  
earth and of all the growths of the  
earth,

I too have felt the resistless call of myself.

As I steam'd down the Mississippi,

As I wander'd over the prairies,

As I have lived, as I have look'd through  
my windows my eyes,

As I went forth in the morning, as I beheld  
the light breaking in the east,

As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern  
Sea, and again on the beach of the  
Western Sea,

As I roam'd the streets of inland Chicago,  
whatever streets I have roam'd,

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Or cities or silent woods, or even amid the  
sights of war,

Wherever I have been I have charged my-  
self with contentment and triumph.

I sing to the last the equalities modern or  
old,

I sing the endless finales of things,

I say Nature continues, glory continues,

I praise with electric voice,

For I do not see one imperfection in the  
universe,

And I do not see one cause or result lament-  
able at last in the universe.

O setting sun! though the time has come,

I still warble under you, if none else does,  
unmitigated adoration.

I AM he that walks with the tender and grow-  
ing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the  
night.  
Press close bare-bosom'd night — press  
close magnetic nourishing night!  
Night of south winds — night of the large  
few stars!  
Still nodding night — mad naked summer  
night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunset — earth of the  
mountains misty-topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon  
just tinged with blue!  
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide  
of the river!

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Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter  
and clearer for my sake!

Far-swooping elbow'd earth — rich apple-  
blossom'd earth!

Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love — there-  
fore I to you give love!

O unspeakable passionate love.

*Song of Myself.*

## A NIGHT REMEMBRANCE

*August 25, 9-10 A.M.* — I sit by the pond, everything quiet, the broad polish'd surface spread before me — the blue of the heavens and the white clouds reflected from it — and flitting across, now and then, the reflection of some flying bird. Last night I was down here with a friend till after midnight; everything a miracle of splendor — the glory of the stars, and the completely rounded moon — the passing clouds, silver and luminous-tawny — now and then masses of vapory illuminated scud — and silently by my side my dear friend. The shades of the trees, and patches of moonlight on the grass — the softly blowing breeze, and just-palpable odor of the neighboring ripening corn — the indolent and spiritual night, inexpressibly rich, tender,

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suggestive — something altogether to filter through one's soul, and nourish and feed and soothe the memory long afterwards.

## NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

NIGHT on the prairies,  
The supper is over, the fire on the ground  
    burns low,  
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their  
    blankets;  
I walk by myself — I stand and look at  
    the stars, which I think now I never  
    realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,  
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how re-  
    sumé!  
The same old man and soul — the same old  
    aspirations, and the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I  
    saw what the not-day exhibited,



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I was thinking this globe enough till there  
sprang out so noiseless around me  
myriads of other globes.

Now while the great thoughts of space and  
eternity fill me I will measure my-  
self by them,

And now touch'd with the lives of other  
globes arrived as far along as those  
of the earth,

Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther  
than those of the earth,

I henceforth no more ignore them than I  
ignore my own life,

Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as  
mine, or waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to  
me, as the day cannot,

I see that I am to wait for what will be  
exhibited by death.

## NIGHT — AND CARLYLE DYING

IN the fine cold night, unusually clear, (February 5, '81,) as I walk'd some open grounds adjacent, the condition of Carlyle, and his approaching — perhaps even then actual — death, filled me with thoughts eluding statement, and curiously blending with the scene. The planet Venus, an hour high in the west, with all her volume and lustre recover'd, (she has been shorn and languid for nearly a year,) including an additional sentiment I never noticed before — not merely voluptuous, Paphian, steeping, fascinating — now with calm commanding seriousness and hauteur — the Milo Venus now. Upward to the zenith, Jupiter, Saturn, and the moon past her quarter, trailing in procession, with the Pleiades following, and the constellation Taurus, and red Aldebaran. Not a cloud in heaven. Orion

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strode through the southeast, with his glittering belt — and a trifle below hung the sun of the night, Sirius. Every star dilated, more vitreous, nearer than usual. Not as in some clear nights when the larger stars entirely outshine the rest. Every little star or cluster just as distinctly visible, and just as nigh. Berenice's hair showing every gem, and new ones. To the northeast and north the Sickle, the Goat and kids, Cassiopeia, Castor and Pollux, and the two Dippers. While through the whole of this silent indescribable show, inclosing and bathing my whole receptivity, ran the thought of Carlyle dying. (To soothe and spiritualize, and, as far as may be, solve the mysteries of death and genius, consider them under the stars at midnight.)

And now that he has gone hence, can it be that Thomas Carlyle, soon to chemically dissolve in ashes and by winds, remains an identity still? In ways perhaps eluding all the statements, lore and speculations of

## THE ROLLING EARTH

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ten thousand years — eluding all possible statements to mortal sense — does he yet exist, a definite, vital being, a spirit, an individual — perhaps now wafted in space among those stellar systems, which, suggestive and limitless as they are, merely edge more limitless, far more suggestive systems? I have no doubt of it. In silence, of a fine night, such questions are answer'd to the soul, the best answers that can be given.

## TWILIGHT

THE soft voluptuous opiate shades,  
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd  
— (I too will soon be gone, dispell'd),  
A haze — nirwana — rest and night —  
oblivion.

THE END

*Finally, the morality: "Virtue," said Marcus Aurelius, "what is it, only a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature?" Perhaps indeed the efforts of the true poets, founders, religions, literatures, all ages, have been, and ever will be, our time and times to come, essentially the same — to bring people back from their persistent strayings and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine, original concrete.*

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